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# The NetWork for Better Futures

## Annual Evaluation Report for the Minnesota Department of Corrections

January 16, 2009



CONTRIBUTING TO A SAFER MINNESOTA

Prepared by

the **Improve**Group™



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## Executive Summary

In 2007, the Minnesota State Legislature allocated a portion of the State Department of Corrections release program dollars to a demonstration project called the “High Risk Adult Demonstration Project” proposed by a new non-profit venture called The NetWork for Better Futures (the NetWork). The NetWork proposed a holistic, community-based approach to help a target group of offenders who are historically at high risk for re-offending. The NetWork project approach has five core elements: housing, behavioral health, health care, short term employment and family/community reengagement.

In addition to allocating dollars to support this demonstration project, the Legislature also allocated dollars for an evaluation of the NetWork program. The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) hired an independent evaluator, the Improve Group, to design and conduct the evaluation. The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of the High-Risk Adult Demonstration Project by examining the extent to which services were delivered to project participants and whether these services had an impact on outcome measures such as housing, employment, participation in treatment programs and criminal activity. This report is the annual report for this evaluation.

In 2008, the NetWork was working to get to full capacity in its processes and staff, so data is incomplete on a number of key indicators. In particular, the number of responses on the participant survey and the available NetWork record data is insufficient to generalize findings based on this data to all NetWork enrollees. Other data sources do provide more complete data about NetWork participants. A priority in the next phase of the evaluation will be to improve data collection methods and/or identify new sources of data for key indicators. The following summarizes the preliminary findings included in this annual report.

### Enrollment

The NetWork has a goal of enrolling and serving 180 men by July 2009. Through October 2008, the NetWork had enrolled 117 men and was actively working with 73. They will need to enroll and serve about 13 men each month to meet their goal; the NetWork has been enrolling an



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average of 11 men each month in 2008, but the enrollment numbers have been increasing in recent months.

### Employment and Economic Contributions

NetWork data is limited so it is difficult to accurately assess the level of employment and economic contributions of NetWork participants. Of the less than one-half of NetWork enrollees about whom such data was reported, a majority of enrollees are employed. Enrollees have worked an average of 31 hours per week. Participants report that the ability to get work through the NetWork's Better Futures work crew is a very helpful resource upon release.

### Housing

NetWork records indicate that 97% of NetWork enrollees are housed by the NetWork. Records are available about the amount of rent paid for 38% of NetWork enrollees. Nineteen of these men have been there for 6 or more months; 3 are paying the full rent on their unit. Participants note that housing is an extremely vital resource upon release; in interviews, many commented that the provision of housing was one of the main reasons they were initially attracted to join the NetWork.

### Health

Data is available about medical coverage for 83% of NetWork enrollees and many (71%) of them have this coverage through their affiliation with the NetWork. While NetWork records do not indicate if and when enrollees had their planned physical and mental health assessments, a majority of the small number of participant survey respondents reported having a physical after they enrolled with the NetWork. Medical records indicate few enrollees receiving physical or behavioral health assessments after enrollment. Chemical dependency and abuse is an issue documented in Minnesota Department of Corrections records for most NetWork enrollees, but there is limited record of broad participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or treatment partner services.

### Education/Training

NetWork data about enrollee participation in education or training is available for 43% of enrollees. These records show that few of the enrollees are engaging in education or job training outside of the NetWork. Enrollees do receive some job placement assistance and feedback about employer expectations while with the NetWork.



### Community

This aspect of the NetWork is described as critical to participant success by both participants and staff. No NetWork data is available about the level of participation in community building events or activities. Participants provided insights on the importance and building of community in their interviews; these perspectives are included in this report.

### Recidivism

Findings about recidivism must be presented in the context of the relatively short time that most offenders have been in the community. At the end of October 2008, the average number of months that offenders had been in the community was about eight months. DOC records indicate that 23 men (20% of NetWork enrollees) had their release revoked because of a violation. Fourteen percent (14%) of enrollees had a new arrest and 4% had a new conviction. In interviews, participants stress their own responsibility for staying out of the corrections system, but did say that the NetWork helps them to stay on the right path.

Next steps in the evaluation include reflecting on the findings of this report and then examining data collection methods and key evaluation questions with the Department of Corrections, the NetWork and other evaluation stakeholders. The Improve Group plans to work with the NetWork and its partners to improve documentation of progress on key indicators, services provided and referrals in preparation for the final report due at the end of June 2009.

## Introduction

In 2007, the Minnesota State Legislature allocated a portion of the State Department of Corrections release program dollars to a demonstration project called the “High Risk Adult Demonstration Project” proposed by a new non-profit venture called The NetWork for Better Futures (the NetWork). The NetWork proposed a holistic, community-based approach to help a target group of offenders who are historically at high risk for re-offending. The NetWork project approach has five core elements: housing, behavioral health, health care, short term employment and family/community reengagement.

In addition to allocating dollars to support this demonstration project, the Legislature also allocated dollars for an evaluation of the NetWork program. The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) hired an independent evaluator, the Improve Group, to design and conduct the evaluation. The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of the High-Risk Adult Demonstration Project by examining the extent to which services were delivered to project participants and whether these services had an impact on outcome measures such as housing, employment, participation in treatment programs and criminal activity.

This report is the first annual evaluation report. It contains:

- A description of the NetWork program (as proposed to the Legislature)
- A summary of the evaluation approach
- A description of those enrolled to date in the NetWork
- Data on preliminary outcomes
- Information about program processes
- Feedback from participants, staff and partners on NetWork effectiveness
- Next steps in the evaluation



## Program Description

The NetWork describes itself as an enterprise amongst partners who serve a common group of high risk adults. Many of these adults have been involved in the criminal justice system, and the Department of Corrections funding for the NetWork supports service to those who have been released from the corrections system within the past twelve months. The NetWork notes that many target participants are also African-American and face multiple barriers to stability that any single NetWork partner has struggled to address in the isolation of a single service or program. NetWork partners have come together to oversee this new venture, with the intention to create a synergistic, effective response to the needs of this target population.

NetWork partners include:

- Job training organizations: Summit Academy OIC and Twin Cities Rise
- Substance abuse treatment organizations: Turning Point and R.S. Eden
- Health care provider NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center
- Health insurance provider Medica
- Affordable housing funder and advocate Family Housing Fund

The NetWork itself has a staff of 13 who are responsible for coordinating services for participants and providing leadership and structure around one of the key elements of the NetWork approach: building a positive community of participants.

The resources and skills of these organizations are a good fit with the five elements which define the NetWork approach:

- Immediate access to safe, affordable housing with a flexible (but time limited) rent subsidy calculated to match a participant's financial and social needs;
- Behavioral health services, including managing relapse and providing access to mental health counseling and services;
- Primary health care emphasizing prevention and early intervention;

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- Employment and education consisting of short term work and access to job training and placement; and,
- Community building and renewal, including efforts to promote community and a sense of belonging, volunteer service, and re-engagement with family and friends.

The NetWork had an initial test phase, working with 50 men in 2007. The demonstration phase began in 2008; the implementation and outcomes of which are the focus of this evaluation.

## Evaluation Approach

This evaluation gathered data from a number of sources about those men who were assessed for participation in the NetWork and/or were enrolled in the NetWork from January 1, 2008 through the end of October 2008. Most data is available about those who enrolled in the NetWork, and many of the outcomes included in this report reference these individuals.

The evaluation design began by collaborating with the NetWork, the Department of Corrections and several of the NetWork's partners to build a logic model that describes the main goals, outcomes and indicators of success associated the NetWork's proposal to the Minnesota Legislature and Department of Corrections. This logic model is included in the appendix to this report. Table 1 below describes the data used to measure progress on these indicators. Instruments and protocols are available from the Improve Group upon request.

**Table 1. Data Collection Methods**

Method	Timing	N	Sources
Program records	Requests for data through October 2008	Varies, noted in report	The Network Department of Corrections Medica Turning Point Twin Cities Rise R.S. Eden Hennepin County Ramsey County
Surveys	October 2008	Staff N = 6 (86% of staff surveyed) Partner N = 5 (71% of partners surveyed) Participants N = 18 (22% of active enrollees)	Staff Participants* Partners
Interviews	August and September 2008	7	Participants

\*A limited number of participants were also surveyed in June 2008 in a pilot test of the survey.

Program records provide data on a number of important indicators in this report. Partners are able to provide data only on those participants with whom they interacted, so data is not available from all partners on all NetWork participants. The Department of Corrections and Counties provided complete data on participants. The Improve Group requested the most data from NetWork participant records. The Improve Group discussed these data requests and provided a sample spreadsheet and list of requests in June 2008. The NetWork reported that much of this data was kept in paper records. The NetWork hired a staff person to create and populate a participant record database in July 2008. The Improve Group provided notice of the deadlines for this report, and the NetWork agreed to complete the database and include all the data from paper records by the deadline in October 2008. Unfortunately, the NetWork participant data provided in October 2008 only provided information on about 40-50% of NetWork participants on most data points. Specific data availability on particular items is noted throughout this report. Because it is incomplete, the data cited from NetWork records cannot accurately represent results for all NetWork participants.

Survey response rates on the staff and partner survey are high; with such small populations significant variance may be evident among survey responses. But, most staff and partner perspectives are represented in the survey responses received. On the other hand, a small share of NetWork participants completed the participant survey. The Improve Group arranged

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to attend a Sunday Night Dinner, an event which most participants are expected to attend, to administer the participant survey. The survey was administered online or by interview to all DOC-eligible participants attending the dinner. Almost all were comfortable completing the survey online at the dinner. However, these respondents represented less than a quarter of all DOC-eligible active enrollees. The Improve Group requested that NetWork staff follow up with remaining participants, asking them to complete the survey online when they were in the NetWork office (an introduction and protocol for asking participants was provided by the Improve Group). However, no further participant surveys were completed. Thus, the response rate dictates that participant survey responses cited in this report can provide qualitative insight on participants and their perspectives but cannot be generalized to represent all NetWork active participants and their perspectives.

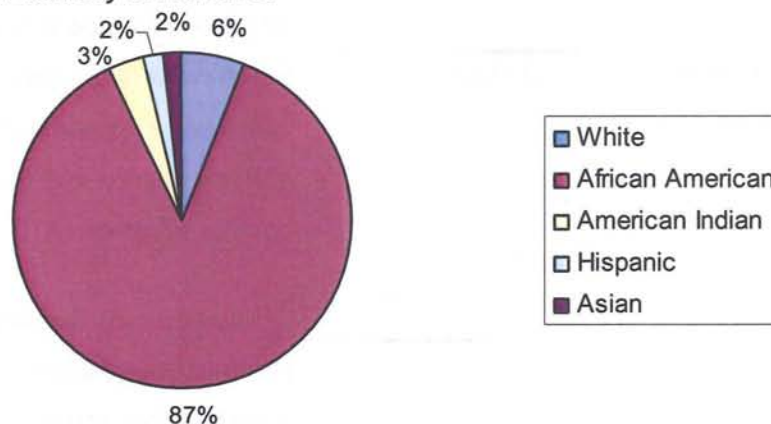
Analysis methods included basic descriptions (frequency and mean) of quantitative data, in addition to statistical tests to investigate whether subgroups of participants differed in certain characteristics or outcomes. These tests included independent sample t-tests, analysis of variance and chi-square tests, where the population size was appropriate to run such tests. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify key findings.

Throughout this report “enrollees” refers to those individuals who were enrolled in the NetWork at some point in 2008; not all remain active with the NetWork at the time of this report.

## Description of NetWork Enrollees

DOC records contain data on the race and ethnicity of NetWork enrollees. As anticipated, most (87%) of the enrollees are African-American, as seen in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of Enrollees**



Source: DOC

Data is available from the Department of Corrections and the NetWork about a number of other variables that describe the program's enrollees. These are summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. NetWork Enrollee Characteristics**

Characteristic	Source	Number of enrollees for whom data is available (%)	Result
Chronically homeless, as defined by HUD <sup>1</sup>	The NetWork	47 (40%)	87% of enrollees were chronically homeless at time of enrollment

<sup>1</sup> Long-term homelessness is defined as an "unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/chronic.cfm>

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Characteristic	Source	Number of enrollees for whom data is available (%)	Result
Education level	The NetWork	62 (55%)	The majority do not have education beyond high school; specifically, 27% have a grade school education, 56% have a high school education, 10% have a vocational/technical college degree and 6% have a college degree
Chemical dependency	Department of Corrections	107 (91%) <sup>2</sup>	87% have a positive result in their chemical dependency assessment, meaning they struggled with dependency or abuse of chemicals; of these, 24 (26%) entered chemical dependency treatment while in the facility, eight (8) of whom completed the program or participated until they were released, five (5) quit the program, and eleven (11) men were dropped from the program due to disciplinary or administrative issues

The DOC also provided other background about NetWork enrollees. As seen in Table 3 below, sentences and length of stay in prison varied widely. About a quarter (26%) had no disciplinary incidents while incarcerated. Few (3 men, 3% of enrollees) had no prior convictions, and few (6 men, 5% of enrollees) had no previous felony conviction. About one-half (56%) had no

<sup>2</sup> Remaining enrollees were Short Term Offenders, so did not enter a DOC facility and thus did not have a chemical dependency assessment.



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previous prison commitment. Table 3 shows that there was significant variance amongst enrollees on disciplinary incidents while incarcerated and prior convictions. Finally, Table 3 also presents the average Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) score for enrollees.<sup>3</sup> The LSI-R is a needs/risk assessment conducted several months before an inmate is released. The highest score possible is 54, and a higher score indicates higher needs/greater risk of re-offending. As seen in Table 3, enrollees have an average score of 29.0, indicating a moderate level of risk/needs.

**Table 3. Enrollee Incarceration Data**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sentence Length (Months)	11.0	288.0	58.2	59.6
Length of Stay in Prison (Months)	0.6	194.7	20.9	30.9
Number of Discipline Incidents	0.0	88.0	9.94	14.2
Number of Prior Convictions	0.0	26.0	4.3	4.0
Number of Prior Felony Convictions	0.0	15.0	2.97	3.1
Number of Prior Prison Commitments	0.0	11.0	1.2	2.1
LSI-R Score	15.0	45.0	29.0	6.9

Source: DOC

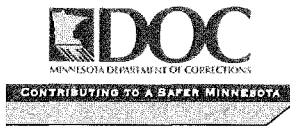
The DOC also provided data on the offenses committed by enrollees. Table 4 shows that offenses against persons were the most common offense committed; please see Table 4 for more information.

**Table 4. Enrollee Offense Committed**

Type of Offense	Number	Percent
Person	58	50%
Property	24	21%
Other	19	16%
Drug	14	12%
Sex	1	1%
DWI	1	1%
	117	

Source: DOC

<sup>3</sup> The LSI-R is a quantitative survey of offender attributes and offender situations relevant for making decisions about levels of supervision and treatment. More information is available at [http://www.assessments.com/catalog/LSI\\_R.htm](http://www.assessments.com/catalog/LSI_R.htm)



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Surveys and interviews provided another opportunity to learn more about the relevant backgrounds of these men. Many (83%) of those completing the participant survey had completed job training before they joined the NetWork; only 17% had never completed any job training. Survey respondents were also asked if they had had any job placement assistance prior to joining the NetWork. While most of survey respondents had completed job training before joining the NetWork, fewer (61%) respondents had had job placement assistance before joining the NetWork.

In interviews, enrollees said they had never participated in anything like the NetWork, in terms of comprehensiveness or support upon release. A few described other programs they had participated in, including:

- Job training (while incarcerated and at Goodwill Easter Seals)
- Release programs “Amicus” and “Emerge” (on previous releases)
- “Power of People” (anger management and critical thinking workshops while incarcerated)

## Preliminary Outcomes

### Participant Economic Stability and Contribution

#### Restitution and Child Support Payments

The NetWork endeavors to help participants pay any restitution or court fines that they owe. However, staff described that it is often difficult to determine if and how much an individual may owe; sometimes the individual does not know. The NetWork has recorded whether or not enrollees owe any restitution for about one-half of enrollees. Of these, most (84%) do not owe any restitution, while 16% (9 individuals) do owe restitution. All of the individuals owing restitution are still active with the NetWork. The NetWork has not documented whether the men are paying this restitution.

The NetWork has recorded whether or not enrollees owe child support for about one-half of enrollees. Of these, 70% do not owe any child support, while 30% (17 men) do owe child support. All but one of these individuals who owe child support are still active with the NetWork. The NetWork has not documented whether the men are paying the child support that they owe.

#### Employment

The NetWork recorded the employer for 38% of their enrollees (44 men). Of these men, 50% (22 men) are employed by the NetWork. On the various employment indicators from NetWork records cited in this section, this item had data about employment for the greatest number of enrollees. Thus, the highest number of enrollees for whom the NetWork has data indicating that the enrollee is employed is 44 enrollees.

NetWork records contain information that describes the primary source of income for slightly more enrollees (44%, or 52 men), most (86%) of whom are currently active with the NetWork. As seen in Table 5 below, about two-thirds are employed, while only one is reported to be relying on government subsidies.

**Table 5. Enrollee Primary Source of Income**

Source of Income	Count	Percent
Employment	34	65%
No Stable Income	15	29%
Friends	1	2%
Other	1	2%
Government Subsidies	1	2%
Total	52	100%

Source: the NetWork

The NetWork has recorded the average number of hours worked per week for 35% of its enrollees, or 41 men. Of these men, 29% or 12 men work 35 or more hours per week, and 63% (26 men) work between 15 and 34 hours per week. A few men (7%) worked between 8-12 hours in an average week. The average hours worked per week for all enrollees was 31 hours/week. The highest average wage earned for these participants is \$8.90/hour.

Interviewees noted that it can be very difficult to find a job upon release, and offenders can face a release violation if they are not able to find work. They cited difficulties in finding a job such as a having a felony background and having no money to look for work (i.e. to pay for bus fare to look for jobs). The Better Futures work crew provides them immediate employment, money and time to look for more permanent, full-time work. One added that it would be helpful if the NetWork could more actively advocate for men, if needed, as they sought work outside the NetWork. He felt that a more proactive recommendation about his commitment and reliability at the NetWork would help when potential employers have reservations about him because of his criminal background.

The NetWork has data about whether or not enrollees are engaged in regular job searching for 50 (43%) of its enrollees. Table 6 below shows that of these men, 63% are engaged in searching for a job regularly. This Table also shows that the results vary by employment status.

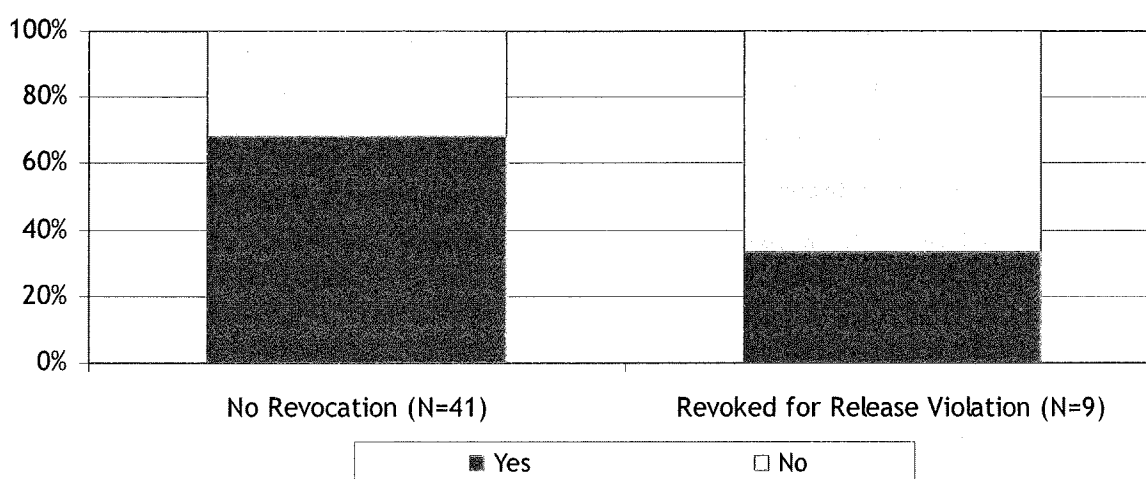
**Table 6. Source of Income and Engagement in Job Search**

Source of income (N)	Engaged in Regular Job Search?	
	% Yes	% No
Employed full or part time (32)	63%	38%
No Stable Income (14)	64%	36%
Friends (1)	100%	0%
Other (1)	100%	0%
Government Subsidies (1)	0%	100%
Total (49)	63%	37%

Source: the NetWork

Statistical tests<sup>4</sup> showed that those who were revoked for a release violation were less likely to have NetWork records indicating that they engaged in a regular job search, compared to those who did not have a release violation. Again, the NetWork has records about engagement in job searching for 50 (43%) of enrollees; the statistical tests examined the difference in release violation outcomes within this group. Sixty-eight percent of those who did not have a release violation engaged in regular job searching; while fewer (33%) of those who were revoked for a release violation did regular job searching. Please also see Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Revoked/Non-Revoked Status and Level of Job Search**  
**Engaged in Regular Job Search (n=50)**



Source: DOC and the NetWork

<sup>4</sup> Chi-square at .05 level of significance

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Finally, the Better Futures work crew has some more advanced, supervisory positions to which participants can advance, such as Driver, Team Leader or Crew Chief. The NetWork has recorded whether enrollees have achieved these advanced positions for 46 enrollees (39% of enrollees). Five enrollees have attained such positions in Better Futures. The available data does not allow determination of enrollees' patterns of job retention, or whether there are any inherent differences between the groups for whom data is or is not available.

In surveys, NetWork staff reported that Better Futures employees receive coaching and feedback on their appearance, attitude, timeliness, cooperation and work quality on a daily or weekly basis. Staff felt that this kind of "soft skills" coaching was very important to participants' ability to find and keep a job. Through surveys, NetWork staff also listed many existing community services they felt help participants with various components of finding and keeping a job. Specifically, Native American OIC, Emerge, Minneapolis Urban League and Goodwill Easter Seals effectively provide training in job searching, application completion, interviewing, defining basic work expectations and job placement. Additionally, the services provided by the Network including goal setting, coaching, housing, the development of a prosperity plan and self reflection are highly effective in helping participants find and maintain work.

In participant surveys, one-third of respondents (survey n=18) said they had received some job placement assistance while with the NetWork. These respondents also characterized their current job satisfaction. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not at all satisfied" and 5 being "Very satisfied", participants had an average satisfaction rate of 3.5. Consistent and timely feedback was noted by the NetWork staff as an important element of workplace success; as Table 7 shows below, participants reported in the survey that they receive feedback on employer expectations fairly regularly from a number of sources.



**Table 7. Sources of Feedback on Employer Expectations**

How often do you receive feedback from the following people on what employers expect?	Mean (1 = never; 5 = often)
Job counselor/ job placement assistance staff	4.1
Better Futures Crew Chief	4.3
Better Futures Team Leader	3.9
Other NetWork staff	3.6
Job trainer	3.8
Manager at my work	4.2
Other	3.3

Source: the Improve Group

According to NetWork staff surveys, barriers to employment that continue to challenge NetWork participants include having a felony record, a lack of work experience, substance abuse and mental illness, no education and a lack of positive work ethic and motivation. Additionally, staff reported that participants need assistance understanding the world of work, workplace rules and expectations, understanding and recognizing the value and the importance of legitimate work, understanding how they are perceived by others and forming a healthy self-perception.

#### Financial Stability

Of the 51 enrollees for whom the NetWork has data available (44% of enrollees), 78% are facing financial difficulties. Of these same enrollees, 42% of these men have a checking account and slightly fewer (40%) have a savings account. Six (12%) of those men with an account maintain at least \$1,000 in an account.

## Participant Physical, Mental and Chemical Health

#### Physical Health

Of the 93 enrollees for whom the NetWork has data available (79% of enrollees), 71% (80 men) have health care through their affiliation with the NetWork.

One feature of the NetWork's program is that all participants are supposed to receive a physical examination and behavioral health assessment at the beginning of their participation with the NetWork. The NetWork does not have data available about whether these have

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occurred. Most (83%) of the survey respondents reported they had a physical exam since joining the NetWork; of these, almost all (92%) had gone to NorthPoint for their physical. Of those that had a physical, almost all (93%) also indicated that the doctor had not told them that any follow-up appointment was needed. The one respondent whose doctor did tell him that follow-up was needed has made an appointment but had not yet gone to the appointment. As Table 8 shows below, the participant survey respondents said that the NetWork has a positive influence on their efforts to be healthy.

**Table 8. NetWork Encouragement of Participant Healthy Behaviors**

Survey Question	Respondent Mean (1=strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)
The NetWork encourages me to be fit and healthy	4.5
The NetWork provides activities to keep me to be fit and healthy	3.7
I try to stay fit and healthy	4.4

Source: the Improve Group

Medica, a NetWork partner, has some related data about 55% (64 men) of enrollees because they have been current or past members of Medica. Thirty-one (31) men (27% of enrollees) enrolled in Medica after enrolling in the NetWork; these men enrolled in Medica an average of 60 days after enrolling in the NetWork. Twenty-one of the thirty-one men (68%) who enrolled in Medica after enrolling in the NetWork still have Medica insurance. Of the ten men no longer enrolled in Medica, six are still active with the NetWork.

Medica records also show that four of the enrollees with Medica insurance obtained a physical exam after enrolling in the NetWork; records also indicate that two enrollees had a behavioral health assessment after their enrollment with the NetWork. Medica records indicate that one enrollee had mental health out-patient visits and one enrollee had chemical dependency out-patient visits after NetWork enrollment.

Medica records indicate that eight NetWork enrollees visited the emergency room after their enrollment in the NetWork. Four of these men had two recorded visits to the emergency room. Reasons listed for emergency room use include:

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- Cracked tooth
- Depression
- Hepatitis C
- Gastro-intestinal infections
- Skin infection
- Injuries to finger, rib or lip
- Pneumonia
- Asthma

Medica records for NetWork enrollees who have Medica insurance show that five men have indicated chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma or hepatitis C. Further, these records indicate that two of these men are currently engaged in active treatment of their chronic condition.

#### Mental Health and Chemical Health

NetWork enrollees are also supposed to receive a mental health assessment at the beginning of their participation with the NetWork. NetWork records do not indicate how many enrollees have undergone this assessment. In participant surveys, 59% of participants said they had received a behavioral health assessment since enrolling with the NetWork; one man said he was referred to follow-up treatment but did not indicate if he had gone or not.

In surveys, staff reported that the NetWork ensures easy access to mental health and substance abuse treatment through providing health insurance, aggressive case management and care coordination and through providing access to a mental health professional who is flexible in his availability. Most (83%) NetWork staff indicated on surveys that they felt those participants who needed mental health care received that care. However, staff survey responses on the ease of access and culturally-appropriateness of mental health and substance abuse treatment varied, as seen in Table 9 below.

**Table 9. Staff Survey Responses on Access to and Cultural-Appropriateness of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Care**

Question Item	Response Rating	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Level of difficulty for participants to access needed mental health treatment	1=Very difficult, 7=Very easy	6	1	7	4.7
Level of difficulty for participants to access needed substance abuse treatment	1=Very difficult, 7=Very easy	6	4	7	5.7
How culturally-appropriate is the treatment for mental illness that participants receive?	1=Not at all culturally-appropriate, 7=Very culturally appropriate	6	2	7	5.8
How culturally-appropriate is the treatment for substance abuse that participants receive?	1=Not at all culturally-appropriate, 7=Very culturally appropriate	4	6	7	6.3

Source: the Improve Group

As mentioned in the Enrollee Description above, DOC data indicate that many NetWork enrollees struggle with chemical dependency. NetWork records show that 16 men (14% of enrollees) had indicated participation in an Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meeting in the past month. The NetWork also recorded how many months enrollees have been sober for 40 enrollees (36% of enrollees). The average length of time sober was 43 months.

Two NetWork partners deal specifically with chemical dependency issues: R.S. Eden and Turning Point. Turning Point reports that they received referrals for five enrollees from the NetWork. Of these, one man enrolled in and graduated from Turning Point's primary treatment and a stay at a halfway house. The remaining four men did not come to Turning Point. Individual-level data is not available from R.S. Eden; R.S. Eden was not aware of any participants who had come to their organization from the NetWork. The NetWork does not have any data about who they referred to partner organizations.

NetWork records indicate that five men have used detox services in the past. Ramsey and Hennepin County records indicate that one NetWork enrollee used detox services in the past year (after his NetWork enrollment date). This enrollee is now inactive with the NetWork.

Finally, in surveys, NetWork staff described the actions that the NetWork takes to assist those who face a mental health or substance abuse relapse. NetWork participants who relapse with

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chemical dependency and/or mental health issues are required to meet with the team leader and are placed on a corrective action plan. If there is a second incident, the case is forwarded to a treatment facility and the participant is required to complete one or a combination of the following: a Rule 25 assessment, aftercare, 30 Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings in 30 days and/or a meeting with the behavioral health specialist. On their survey, one participant described the NetWork response to substance abuse issues:

*I witnessed some very supportive efforts to help people stay sober, a few individuals that were having problems, was granted what they need, as far as resources and opportunities not to destroy what they work hard for, and I respected that a lot as a recovering addict myself. This is a place where I know that people generally care about you, regardless if they can give more of themselves, they do what they can.*

Overall, NetWork staff survey data indicates that all staff felt that those participants who needed substance abuse treatment received it; five in six staff agreed that those enrollees who need mental health services receive those services.

## Participant Housing

NetWork data for 91 men (78% of all enrollees) shows that 97% were living in housing provided by the NetWork. NetWork data for 49 men (42% of enrollees) shows that 96% had NetWork housing continuously through their involvement with the organization.

Several interviewees mentioned how a lack of income, criminal background and lack of rental history makes finding housing difficult upon release and that the NetWork housing is helpful for that. Interviewees added that being able to live on their own in an apartment is an important aspect of that housing as well. They describe that living alone helps them to focus on improving themselves and several showed pride in keeping their own place. As one interviewee said, "Living on your own, for the first time, you get yourself together, might look at life differently. This is mines now, can build off this here."

As Table 10 shows below, participant survey respondents generally say they feel safe in their housing and agree less strongly that they feel safe in their community and can afford their housing.

### Table 10. Participant Survey Responses about Housing

Survey Question	Mean response (1=strongly disagree: 5 = strongly agree)
I feel safe in my apartment	4.1
I feel safe in my community	3.9
I can afford my housing	3.7

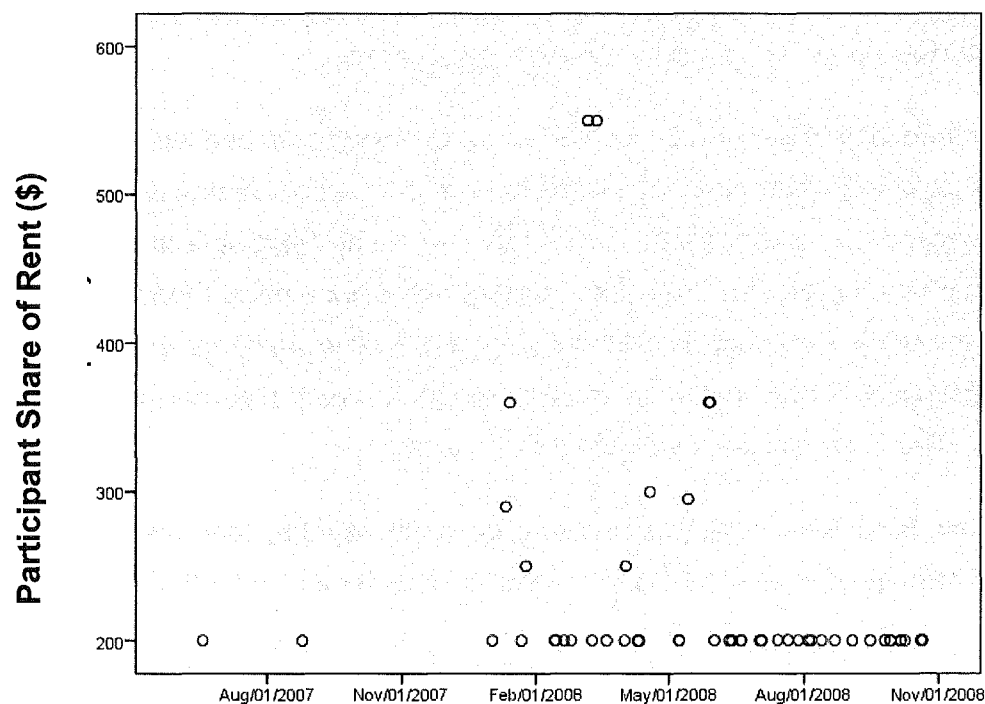
Source: the Improve Group

## Rent Payment

The NetWork has data available about the rent paid by enrollees for 45 men (38% of enrollees). One indicator of success for the NetWork is how many participants are paying their full market-rate rent after six months of participation. Rent amounts are included in NetWork records for 19 men who have been in the NetWork for six or more months in October 2008. Of these, three men (16%) are paying full rent, without any subsidy from the NetWork.

Most (89%) of the NetWork's units rent for \$550, and many (78%) of reported enrollees pay \$200/month. As seen in Figure 3 below, while most recent enrollees are still paying \$200/month, some earlier enrollees continue to pay \$200/month in rent as well.

**Figure 3. Participant Share of Rent Payment and Enrollment Date**





Source: the NetWork

## Participant Education and Skill Building

As noted earlier, most NetWork participants do not have advanced degrees and may struggle with job-readiness skills. NetWork records indicate whether or not enrollees are enrolled in school or job training. The NetWork has this status for 50 men (43% of enrollees). Of these, two men enrolled in both job training and school. Three other men enrolled in either school or job training. Three institutions were listed as the sites where men were enrolled in school or job training: Summit Academy OIC, Emerge or Minneapolis Community and Technical College. In participant surveys (survey n=18), 22% of participants reported they had engaged in some sort of job training while with the NetWork.

Two NetWork partners provide job training: Twin Cities Rise and Summit Academy OIC. Twin Cities Rise reported on referrals with the NetWork; Summit Academy OIC did not provide data in response to the evaluation request. Five NetWork enrollees had completed a program at Twin Cities Rise prior to enrolling in the NetWork. These men completed either the Awali or “core” program at Twin Cities Rise. Twin Cities Rise describes its core program as a training and skill development program that includes classroom training, one-on-one coaching, outside training and supportive services as needed. Input from customer companies and adult educators frames the curriculum. Awali is a specialized program aimed at training incarcerated men with the soft and hard skills needed to earn and retain living-wage employment. One other man had enrolled at Twin Cities Rise before enrolling in the NetWork, but Twin Cities Rise records do not indicate if he completed a program. Finally, Twin Cities Rise reported that one NetWork enrollee had enrolled in Twin Cities Rise in October 2008 but had not yet started a program at the time data was shared for this report.

## Participant Community

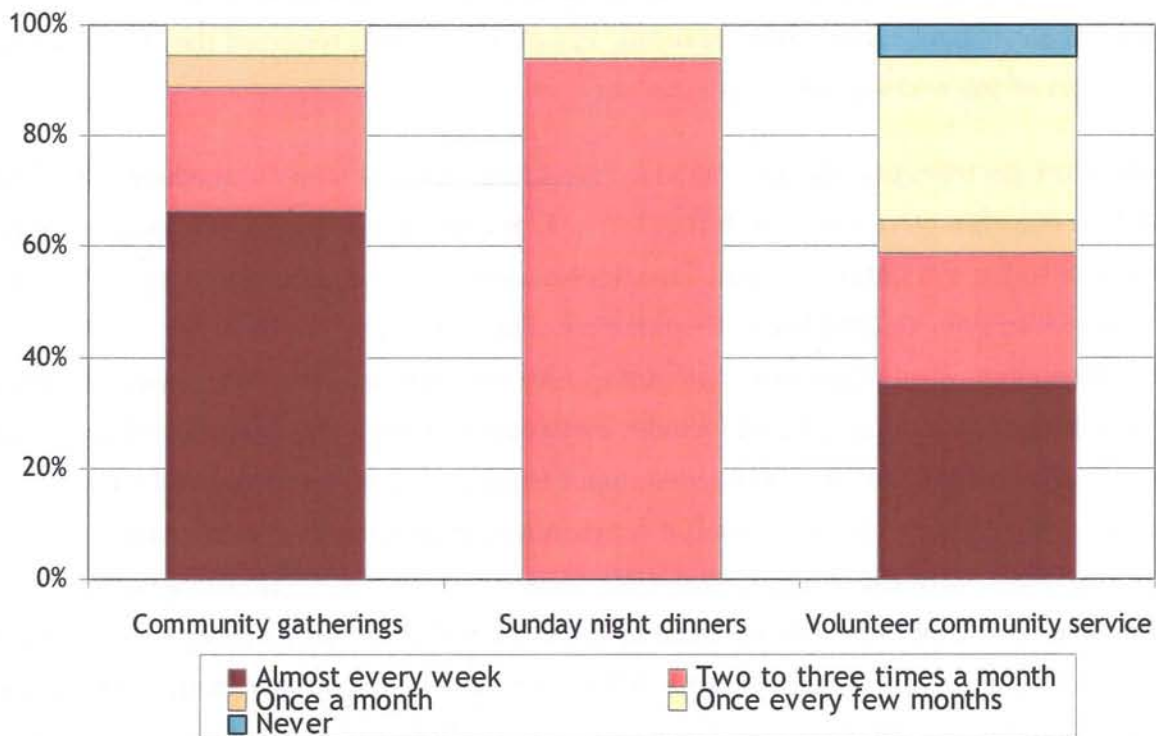
The NetWork uses several strategies designed to build a positive community amongst participants, including community meetings, Sunday night dinners, daily rituals and expectations of volunteer service. The NetWork does not have any available data about how

many enrollees participate regularly in community meetings, Sunday night dinners or community volunteering.

In participant surveys, respondents indicated that they regularly attended community meetings and Sunday night dinners, as seen in Figure 4 below, but less frequently do volunteer service. Because the survey was administered during Sunday night dinners, it is likely that participation in that activity is over-reported and not representative of all enrollees.

**Figure 4. Participant in Community Activities**

How often do you participate in the following activities? (n=18)



Source: the Improve Group

Interviewees described that the positive support of others around them as an important aspect of their experience with the NetWork. Interviewees assert that the support feels all the more relevant because participants have common backgrounds and all have the same goals. This may be quite different than what participants have been surrounded by before. One interviewee described that some participants have only ever been around negativity and they have “gotten used to it”; the strong, positive atmosphere is different and provides motivation for participants to stay on their path. One interviewee described the NetWork as,

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“A community of men doing well, that’s what this is.” Interviewees describe the feeling of being able to reach out to this community. One said that it is important that he can contact Team Leaders anytime he has an issue. Another commented that there are “A lot of people to talk to, ask questions you normally wouldn’t ask.”

As aspect of community building is the schedule and daily rituals. Interviewees also commonly describe that the structure that the NetWork provides is helpful. Many spend most of their day there, as well as attending community meetings twice a week, Sunday dinners and other events. They describe that though they all have their moments of not wanting to go to *another* event, this schedule and structure helps them stay focused. One interviewee described:

*Coming out of prison, you don’t know where you are going to go, don’t know where your next meal is going to come from. The NetWork gave me stability in my life, something to look forward to, to wake up to in the morning - this is what I do today. If I didn’t have it, I’d be like what am I going to do today? Now I have a schedule, get up and go to work in the morning. If I get off, look for a job.*

Community meetings and Sunday night dinners are a key way of building community for many of the interviewees. Interviewees said they learned things in community meetings. They learn about banking or money management in some meetings; in others, they may learn about how to react in a negative situation. Interviewees used terms like “a breath of fresh air”, “enlightened”, “aware and refreshed” and “peaceful” to describe how they felt after community meetings. One interviewee said he felt people were often just saying what they thought they should say and not being real in community meetings, so that made the meetings feel like a waste of time. But, he added that one could take something away from the meetings if one is ready to change.

## Other Milestones

The NetWork has set other milestones to help track participant stability and progress.

### Driver’s License

The NetWork encourages participants to have or obtain a valid driver’s license to help them with employment and general transportation issues. NetWork records indicate that 30

enrollees (27% of enrollees) have a valid driver's license; another five enrollees have a driver's license number listed with no indication that the license has been revoked.

### Prosperity Plan

The NetWork asks participants to create a Prosperity Plan. The NetWork describes that this tool is "...developed with coaching and advice from a Team Leader and outlines a handful of goals that the participant wants to achieve over a six to eighteen month period. Typically, a participant defines goals and benchmarks related to work, family, personal development, and physical and emotional health."<sup>5</sup> NetWork records indicate enrollee progress on their prosperity plan for 49 men (42% of enrollees). Of these, most (78% or 38 men) are "on track". Seven men (14%) are "off track" and four men (8%) are "not advancing".

Most interviewees added that it was important that the NetWork pushes them to set goals and would check in with participants often on their progress. In addition, some interviewees added that the fact that the NetWork believes in their potential was also powerful.

Interviewees also shared some of the contents of their "Prosperity Plan":

- Have a place to stay
- Establish rental history
- Be self-sufficient
- Save money
- Build and/or repair family relationships (i.e. gaining custody, paying child support, visiting family)
- Pursue education/job training
- Set out career interests/goals (i.e. work with children, start a business)
- Maintain/improve health (i.e. do not smoke, work-out)
- Work at/find a full-time job
- Get a driver's license

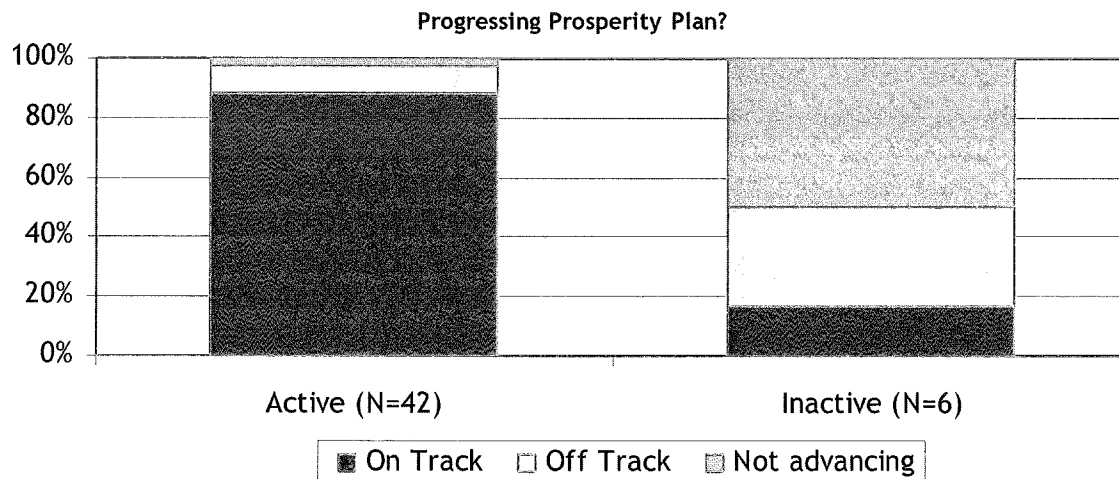
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<sup>5</sup> A Proposal to the Minnesota Department of Corrections: A Re-entry Demonstration Project for High-Risk Adults submitted by The NetWork for Better Futures to the Department of Corrections September 18, 2007.

- Gain membership in the NetWork

As Figure 5 shows below, the Prosperity Plan appears to be a good tool to identify those who may be more likely to leave the NetWork. Of the six enrollees who became inactive, three were not advancing and two were off track on their prosperity plan.

**Figure 5. Active/Inactive Enrollees and Progress on Prosperity Plan**



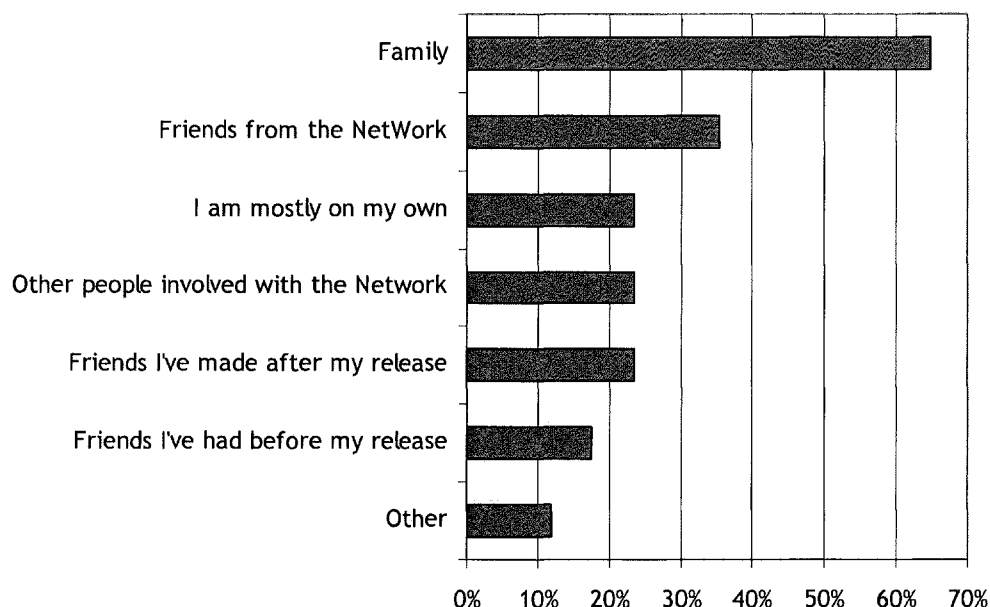
Source: the NetWork

#### Family and Friend Re-engagement

Surveys and interviews provide some insight into participant re-engagement with family and friends. Other than NetWork participants, interviewees said they mostly spent time with family in a normal week. In surveys, participants also indicated that they most often spend time with family, or friends from the NetWork. Figure 6 below shows the percent of respondents selecting who they spend time with in a normal week (respondents could select more than one response).

**Figure 6. Who Participants Spend Time With in a Normal Week**

Who do you spend time with in a normal week? (n=17)



Source: the Improve Group

The family influence seems to be positive. Many interviewees want their families to be proud of them and the things they are doing. In participant surveys, most (94%) of respondents said they had been in contact with family. Most (93%) of these men felt this was a positive experience for their family and either a positive (80% of respondents) or mixed (positive and negative) experience (20% of respondents) for themselves. Participants also indicated on their surveys that many (71%) were satisfied with the relationship with their children. Fewer participants have been in touch with friends than have been in touch with family. About three-quarters of survey respondents had been in touch with friends, of whom 85% felt that the experience had been positive for their friends. The same percent felt the experience had been positive for them, whereas 15% reported having a mixed (positive and negative) experience. Some participants face difficulties with familial expectations. As one participant explains, "Sometimes people expect you to be the same way you were, being there for them financially and time wise, but I have restrictions and it's difficult and sometimes it doesn't help because I'm expected to be everywhere and do everything."



In surveys, NetWork staff presented varying viewpoints on the impact of participant re-engagement with family and friends. While it was recognized that reconnecting can be a very positive experience for participants, staff also acknowledged that there are many factors to consider. Staff stated that this is and should continue to be something that is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. As one staff member stated,

*It is a wonderful thing for men to reengage with family and friends. However, there can be many problems that arise as a result of premature reengagement. The participant must first establish himself and begin to build a solid base for himself which includes: working, paying bills, mental and physical health assessments and follow-ups and [to] begin empowerment training. Once he has begun to build a history of positive works, and his seeds have begun to grow roots, then reengagement should happen. The reason this is important to happen first is that most times the environment that they were in prior to being incarcerated is not a good environment to go back to once released. Secondly, it is important for the men, who in many cases have never taken responsibility for anything, begin to become responsible "men", who will be able to care for loved ones and chose [sic] more appropriate friends.*

## Participant Recidivism

Findings about recidivism must be presented in the context of the relatively short time that most offenders have been in the community. At the end of October 2008, the average number of months that offenders had been in the community was about eight months. DOC records indicate that 23 men (20% of NetWork enrollees) had their release revoked because of a release violation. Of those revoked for a release violation, 70% were on Intensive Supervised Release and 30% were on Supervised Release.

The Department of Corrections also has data on offender arrests and convictions after enrollment with the NetWork through the end of October 2008. Many (86%) enrollees were not arrested since entering the NetWork, but 14% (16 men) were arrested since entering the NetWork. Half of the men were inactive with the NetWork at the time of their arrest.

Most (96%) enrollees had not been convicted of a new offense since entering the NetWork, but 4% (5 men) had been convicted of a new offense since enrolling in the NetWork. These men were also included in the above count of 16 men arrested. Three of these men were on Supervised Release; two were on Intensive Supervised Release. Two of these convictions were

for felonies, two for Gross Misdemeanors and one for a Misdemeanor. Three of these men were resentenced to prison for new offenses. Table 11 below summarizes the amount of time from NetWork enrollment to new arrests, new convictions or re-incarceration.

**Table 11. Summary of Time from NetWork Enrollment to Arrest, Conviction or Re-Incarceration**

Time until...	New Arrest (N=16)	New Conviction (N=5)	Re-incarceration (N=25) <sup>6</sup>
Minimum Number of Days	3	41	11
Maximum Number of Days	264	288	200
Average Number of Days	136	169	80

Source: DOC and the NetWork

Statistical tests<sup>7</sup> examined whether there were any differences (1) between those who were or were not resentenced to prison for a new offense, (2) between those who were or were not reincarcerated or (3) between those who have or did not have release violations. No differences were found in these comparison groups on the basis of their length of stay in prison, the number of prior convictions, the number of prior felony convictions, the number of prior prison commitments or the number of disciplinary convictions while incarcerated. No short-term offenders violated their release or were arrested or convicted, according to DOC records; few enrollees (10 men) are short-term offenders.

On surveys, NetWork participants cited a need for better employment and better pay as the most important additional support they need to avoid future criminal activity. Yet most participants said that the NetWork provides them with everything they need to avoid recidivism. As one participant stated,

*I'm in the NetWork, the NetWork is my bread and butter and my social inspiration, spiritual inspiration. They motivate me to not only help myself but to help others around me, other members of the network and other members of society, they help me to remain a positive person and to shine a light to help those around me be positive and good and law-abiding citizens.*

Participants mentioned nearly every component of the services provided by the NetWork as being important in helping them to avoid criminal activity. This was expressed in one participant survey response,

<sup>6</sup> Not all those convicted have a re-incarceration date

<sup>7</sup> Independent t-test at .05 significance

*...working, looking for work, looking for schooling, just being in the NetWork itself because it is such a positive environment, it is so helpful with everything that it does from the Monday night meetings to the Friday night meetings, to the day to day activities, there is always someone here willing to help you find a job, find school, find food, housing, or any other social institution which will help and assist ex-felons.*

Though interviewees often stressed the importance of their own responsibility for their actions, they almost always said that the NetWork helps them stay out of prison. One even observed, "Without the NetWork, I would say [there is a] 60% chance that I would have relapsed or reoffended."

## Program Processes

### Referral, recruitment, assessment and enrollment

The NetWork for Better Futures receives referrals from a number of sources for men who may be a good fit for the NetWork. The NetWork provided data about the source of referral for 86% of the men who enrolled in the NetWork. No data about source of referral is available for men who declined to participate in the NetWork, and very limited data is available about source of referral for those whose enrollment is pending. DOC-eligible NetWork enrollees were referred predominantly by the DOC, as seen in Table 12 below.

**Table 12. Source of Referrals for Enrollees**

Referral Source	Number Referred From Source	Percent of Total Referrals
DOC/State Correctional Facility	75	69%
Community Organization	15	14%
County Correctional Facility	4	4%
Partner Agencies	6	6%
Walk-In	4	4%
Short Term Offender	2	2%
Other Participant	1	1%
Supervising Agent	1	1%
Total	108	100%
No referral data available	9	

Source: the NetWork

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The NetWork assessed 162 eligible men for participation in the NetWork through November 19, 2008. While some (21 men, 12%) are still pending on their enrollment, 78% (126) enrolled in the NetWork and 9% (15 men) declined to enroll in the NetWork.

In surveys, NetWork staff described that they recruit members from the various partner organizations, Department of Corrections case workers, ISR agents, 180 Degrees<sup>8</sup> and from the Hennepin County and State Workhouse facilities. NetWork staff recruits via the telephone, as well as in person at these various sites. Site visits include contacting the administration, giving NetWork overview sessions, interviewing potential participants, discussing eligibilities, opportunities, expectations and personal accountability.

#### Enrollment Status

Of the 117 enrollees who are the subject of this report (enrolled through the end of October 2008), NetWork records indicate that 73 enrollees (64% of enrollees) continue to be active with the NetWork, while 42 (37% of enrollees) are now inactive. (Status is not recorded for two enrollees.) Some (10 men) of the active enrollees became inactive at some point in 2008 and then re-enrolled with the NetWork. The NetWork aims to have enrolled and served 180 men by July 2009. With 73 active enrollees at the end of October 2008, the NetWork would need to enroll and serve about 13 men per month to meet this goal. The average monthly enrollment in 2008 (through September) was 11 men, though the number recruited per month has been increasing in recent months.

Table 13 below provides more detail about the amount of time from enrollment to inactive status and from the time a participant became inactive to when he re-enrolled.

**Table 13. Summary of Time from NetWork Enrollment to Becoming Inactive and Time from Inactive to Re-Enrolling**

Time until...	Becoming Inactive from Enrollment (N=43)	Re-enrolling from Inactive Status (N=10)
Minimum Number of Days	1	6
Maximum Number of Days	442	158
Average Number of Days	62	55

Source: DOC and the NetWork

<sup>8</sup> 180 Degrees is a Minneapolis organization that provides residential (short-term) and non-residential services for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Statistical tests<sup>9</sup> did not show any difference between those who were active or inactive in the NetWork on the basis of their length of stay in prison, the number of prior convictions, the number of prior felony convictions, the number of prior prison commitments or the number of disciplinary convictions while incarcerated.

Interviewees provided some insight into what draws men to the NetWork, and what encourages them to stay. Housing is usually the biggest reason that offenders are initially drawn to the NetWork. For some, they did not have anywhere else to go, or were not approved for other housing options. Several interviewees said they want to stay for the positive relationships, motivation and inspiration. Several also said that they felt they wanted to stay because they wanted to help others who have been in their situation. Though some described having bad days at work or getting frustrated at times with a situation, all but one said they would not want to leave. One interviewee said he would leave when allowed by release conditions because he felt that people do not “keep it real”. This interviewee felt he had a positive relationship with one NetWork staff person and that the community could be beneficial, but he was bothered that he felt like other participants were not really saying what they thought.

#### Partnerships

Insight into the dynamics of NetWork partnerships is provided primarily through surveys and interviews. In participant surveys, a minority of respondents reported participating in partner programs, as seen in Table 14 below. Those respondents who went to a partner organization were generally positive about the helpfulness of services received; however, they often ranked access to services as difficult or somewhat difficult. Other services that participants use include Urban Ventures, Goodwill and Amicus. All three were rated easy to access and offered helpful services.

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<sup>9</sup> Independent t-test at .05 significance

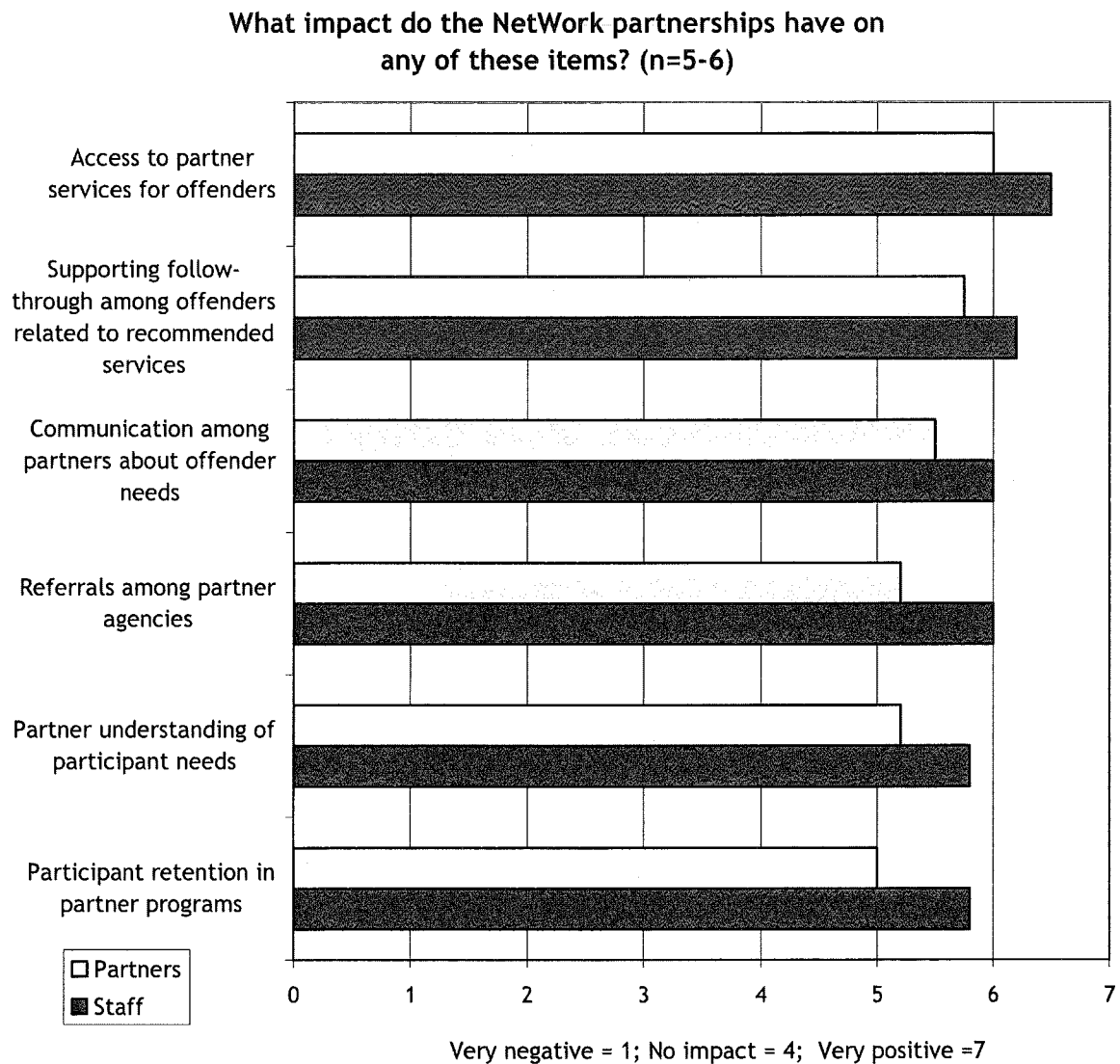
**Table 14. Participant Survey Responses about Partner Organization Participation**

Do you receive services from the following organizations?	Yes	No
Summit Academy OIC	11%	89%
Twin Cities RISE!	6%	94%
Turning Point	6%	94%
RS Eden	6%	94%
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center	39%	61%
Fairview	6%	94%

Source: the Improve Group

As Figure 7 shows below, NetWork staff members are generally more positive about the impact of partnerships than their colleagues at partner organizations; both see the largest impact of partnerships is in access to partner services. Across the board, staff and partners characterize the impact as positive.

**Figure 7. Impact of Partnerships in NetWork**

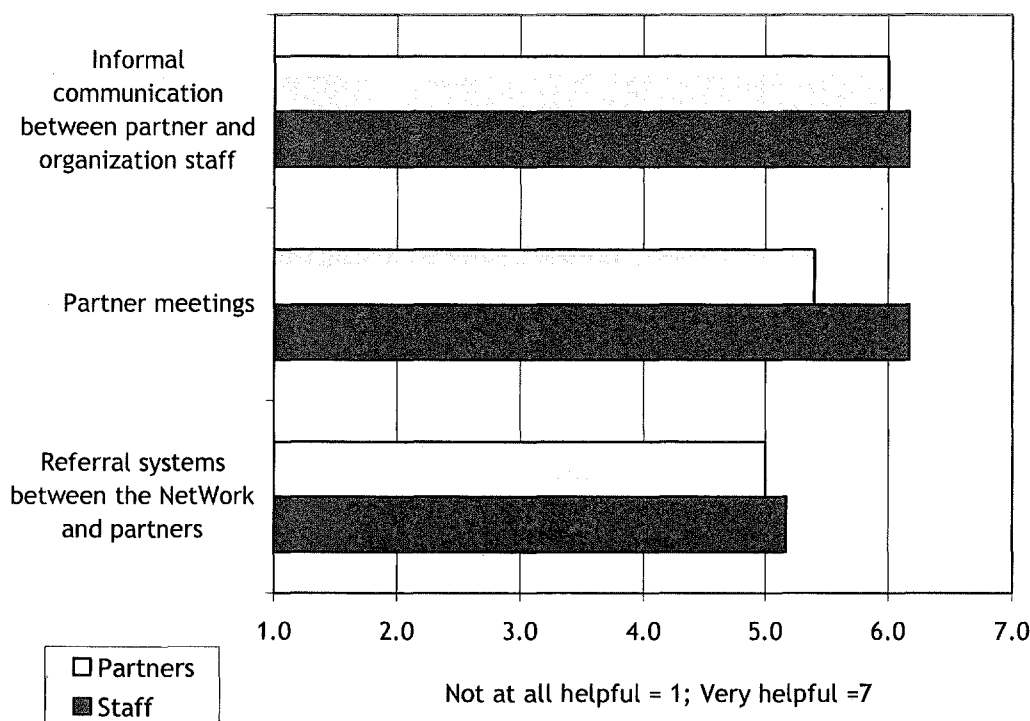


Source: the Improve Group

Figure 8 shows that informal communication amongst partners is the most effective method to help partnerships meet participant needs; referral systems are not ranked as highly by staff and partners.

**Figure 8. Partnership Activities That Help Meet Participant Needs**

How helpful are the following activities in building strong partnerships that meet participant needs? (n=5-6)



Source: the Improve Group

In surveys, partner organizations felt that better coordination between the NetWork and partner agencies would improve the NetWork's ability to serve participants. Additional partner suggestions included:

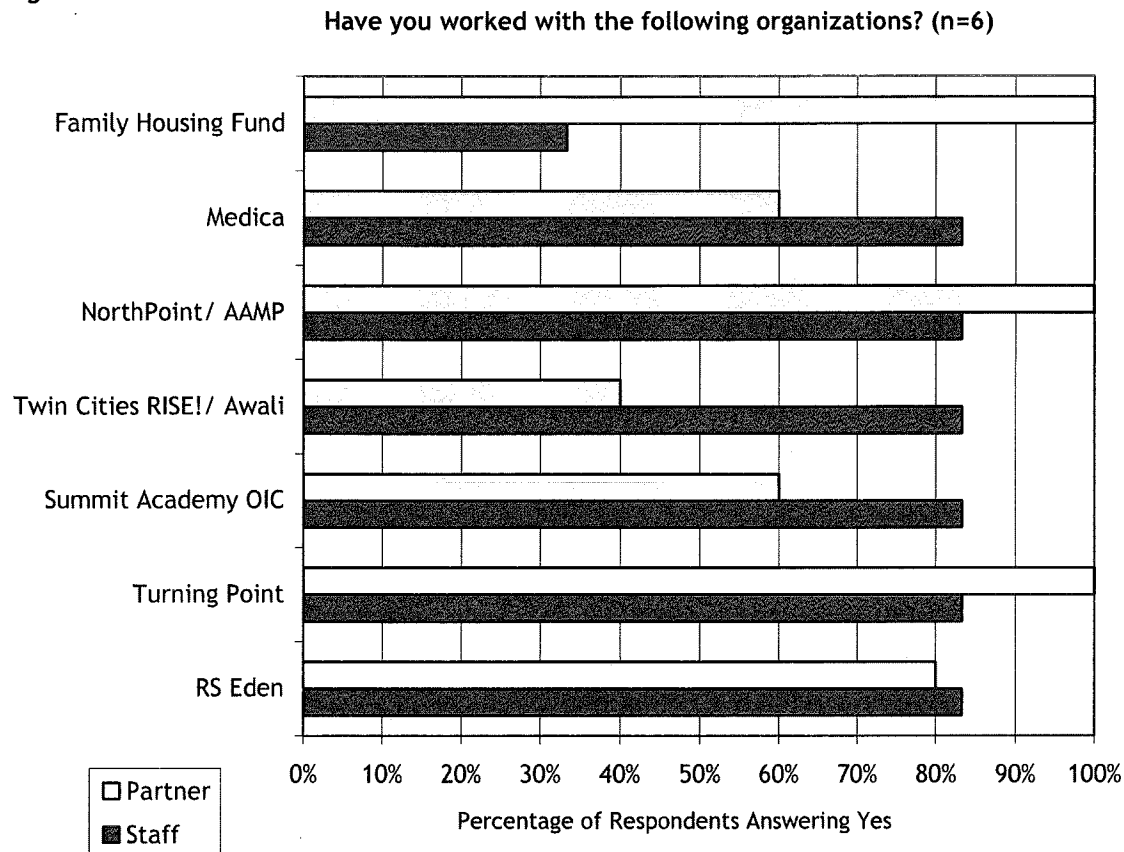
- Identifying individual development needs and creating participant action plans for education and skill training to make them more competitive in the job market
- Working with the men prior to release
- Reconnecting men to family and their community immediately following release

Staff ideas on additional partners that could prove helpful to the NetWork included: Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, an employment and training agency and religious organizations. Partners' ideas included the African American Men's Project, Emerge and educational institutions including community colleges, technical schools and universities.



Figure 9 shows that most staff reported working with most of the partner organizations. Family Housing Fund does not provide direct service, so that may be why interactions are not regular with staff. The fewest partners have engaged with the job training partners.

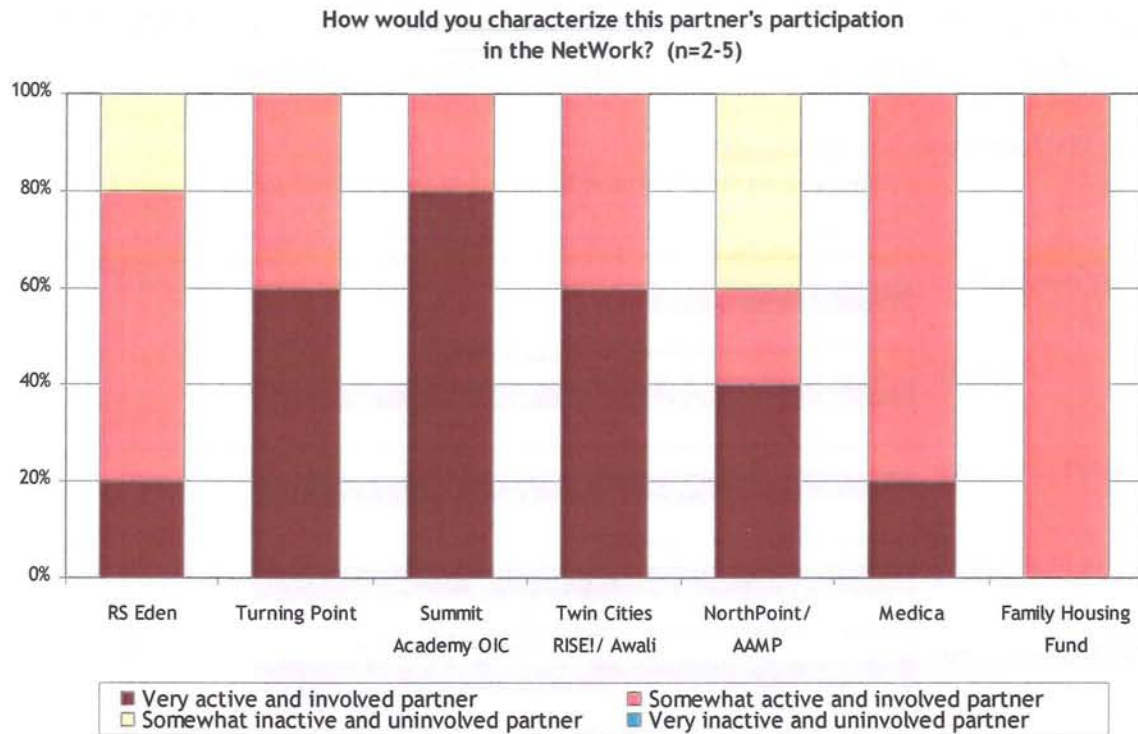
**Figure 9. Staff and Partner Interactions**



Source: the Improve Group

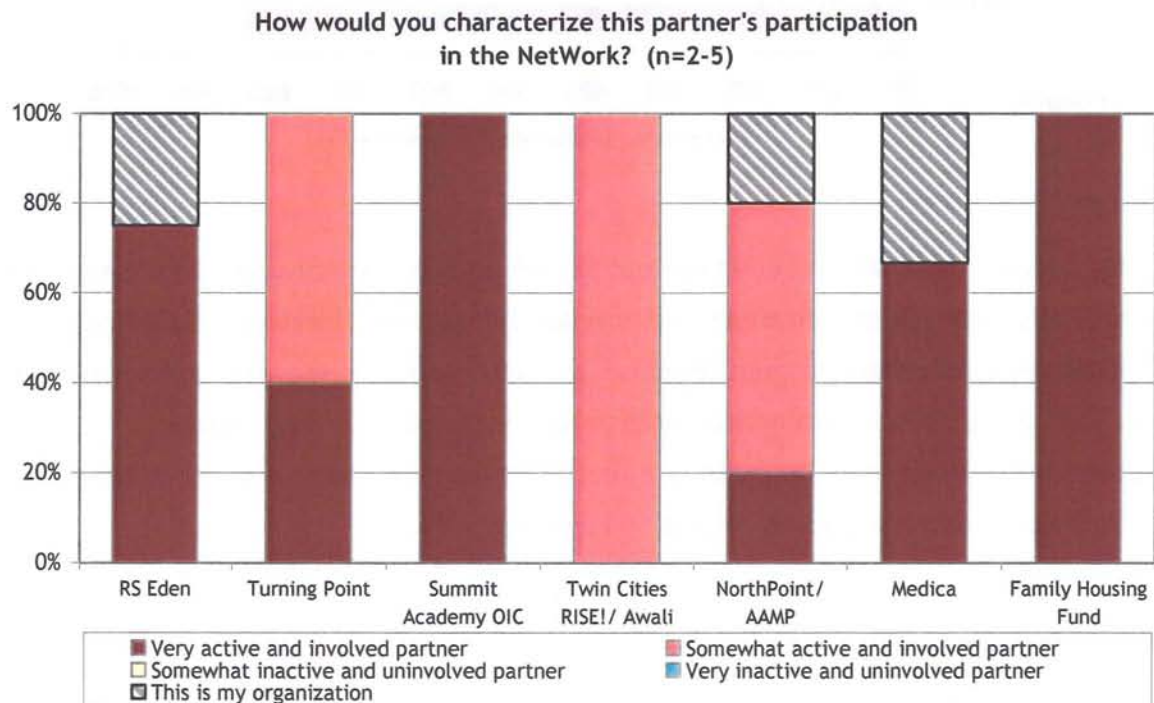
Staff and partners were also asked in surveys to rank partner participation, how easy it was to work with other partner organizations and how helpful partners' services were in meeting participant needs. Staff and partner responses on these items are shown in Figures 10 - 15 below. Staff and partners were mostly positive about the extent of one another's engagement, the ease of working with one another and the helpfulness of one another's services, though some variation is evident in Figures 10 - 15.

**Figure 10. Staff Responses about Partner Participation**



Source: the Improve Group

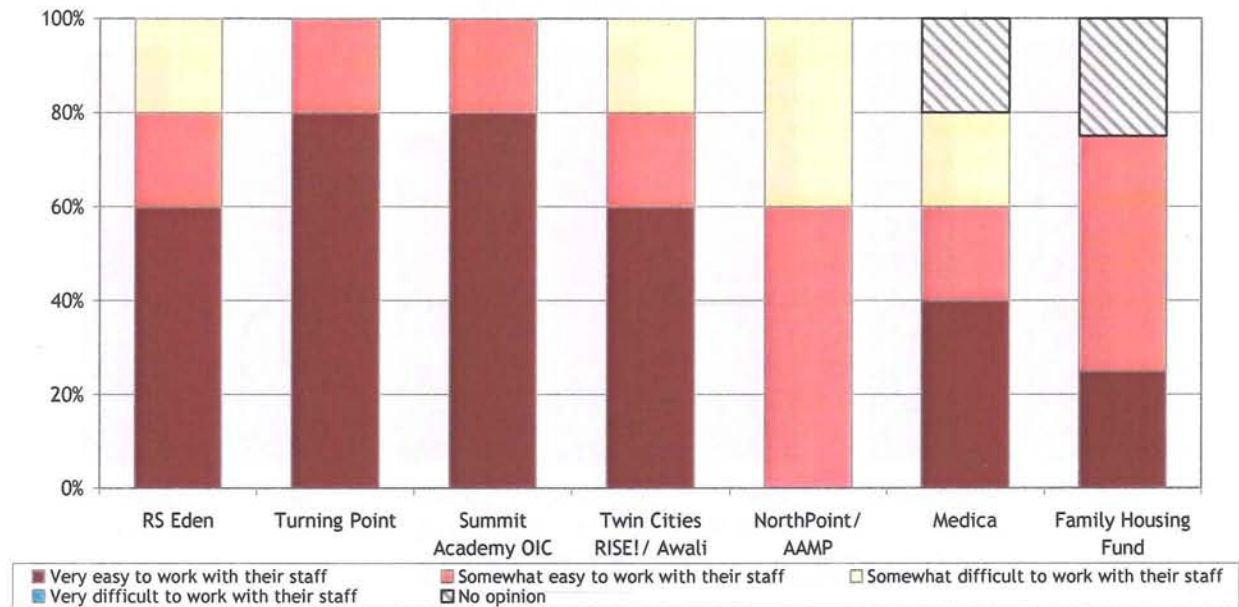
**Figure 11. Partner Responses about Partner Participation**



Source: the Improve Group

**Figure 12. Staff Responses to Ease of Working with Partners**

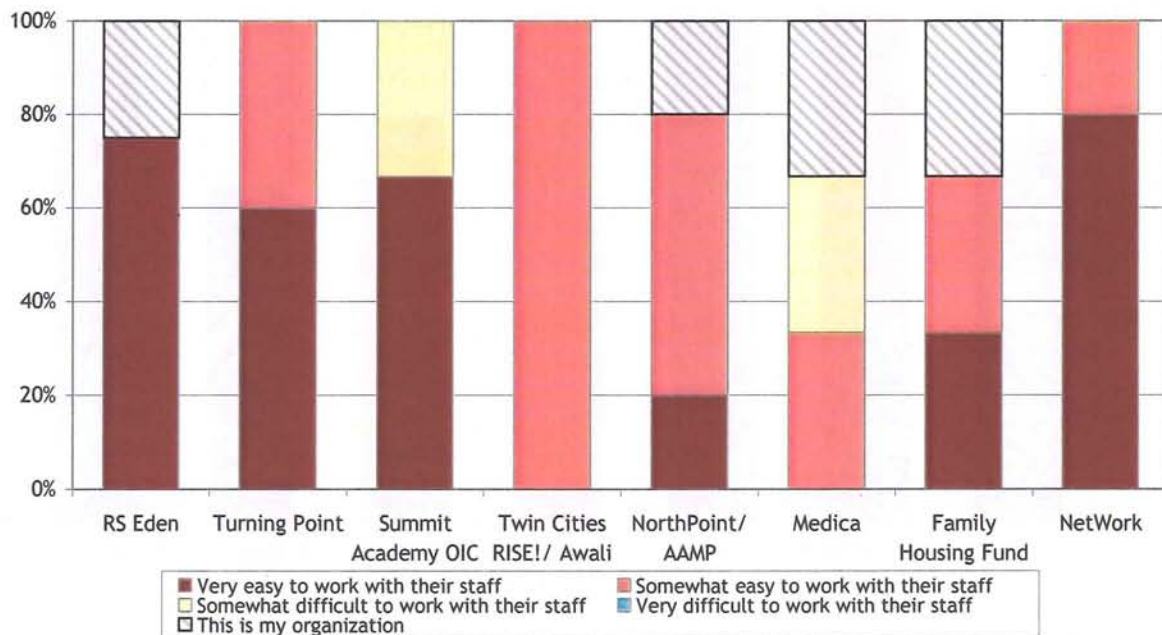
How easy is it for you to work with this partner? (n=2-5)



Source: the Improve Group

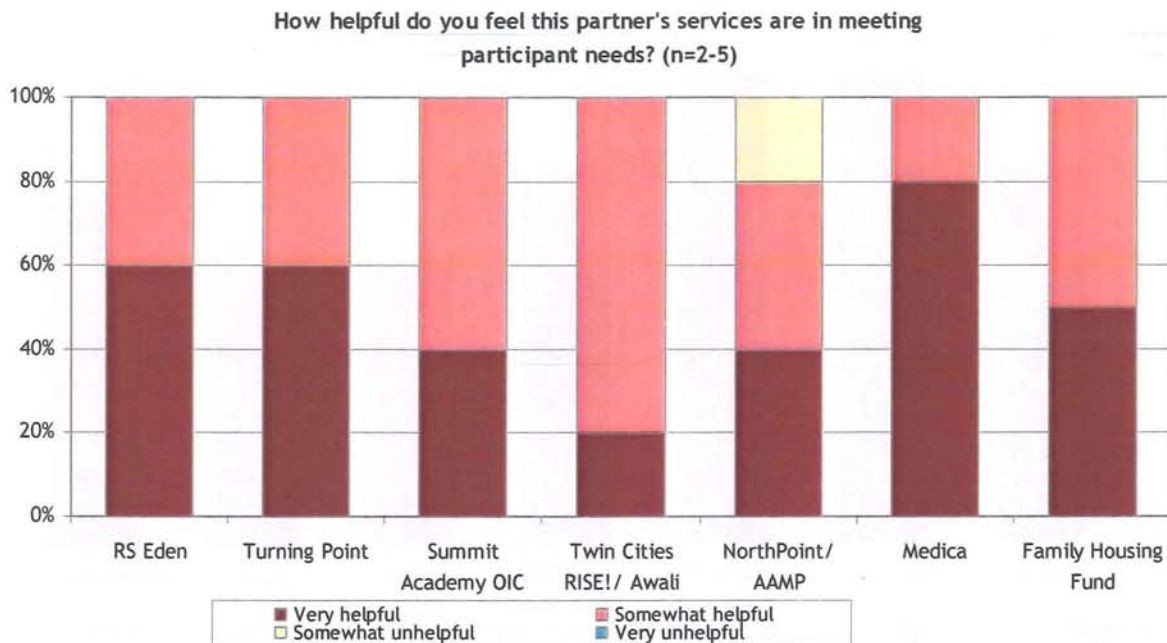
**Figure 13. Partner Responses to Ease of Working with Other Partners**

How easy is it for you to work with this partner? (n=2-5)



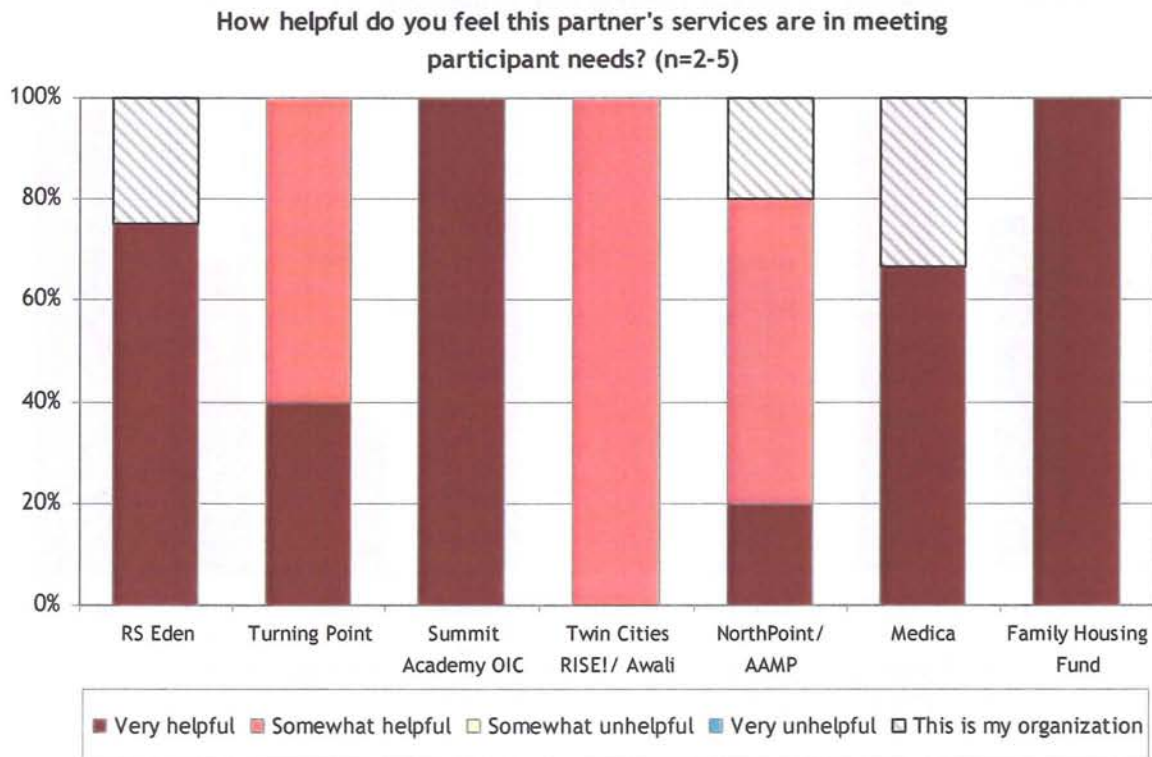
Source: the Improve Group

**Figure 14. Staff Assessment of Helpful Partner Services**



Source: the Improve Group

**Figure 15. Partner Assessment of Helpful Partner Services**



Source: the Improve Group

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Interviewees commented on the use of partner services. A couple interviewees planned on going to a Summit training program. If any of them had received medical services, they had gone to NorthPoint. Interviewees did not describe any problems with referrals or follow-up with Summit or medical care at NorthPoint. One interviewee described that he is delaying enrolling in a program at Summit because he needs to get full-time work or will face release violation. He had also gone to NorthPoint to seek out some mental health treatment (with a psychiatrist). He said that when they saw he had a sensitive offense, they referred him to Lutheran Social Services. He felt put off and has been unable to follow up because he has been focused on trying to find a job. He felt like the NetWork would help or provide advice if he talked to them about the situation, which he planned to.

### Building a Positive Community

In interviews, participants provided some additional thoughts on how the community is important, and why and how they feel connected as a community. Interviewees often referred to NetWork participants as a “brotherhood”, “brothers” or a “family”. They are empowered by the similarities they see in each other, including similar desire for achieving positive goals. One interviewee said,

*I feel good because they are me and I'm him. We are struggling for excellence, we are not here to put each other down, and we are here for each other. We're here to go up. Every time I walk in that door, there's a smile on my face, every time.*

All interviewees said they would talk to NetWork staff or participants if they had a problem or were struggling with an issue. Two mentioned only Team Leaders or other NetWork staff as people they would talk to, but the rest said that they would definitely talk to other participants about worries. Interviewees mostly described that they would hang out with other NetWork participants during the week. This provides opportunities for socializing and entertainment without exposing participants to possibly negative situations. One participant explained,

*[I would hang out with] these guys. We're on the same level. We're not going to let each other get knocked off our square. Why would I mess with somebody out in the street when I know what they are doing? I know what these guys are doing; they are doing the same thing I am doing; it's all positive. I'm not saying people not here are all a negative influence, not at all. When [you are] out there, there could be more negativity around somewhere and these guys*



*are not going to let it come our way. This is a force, a machine. Protective in a major way.*

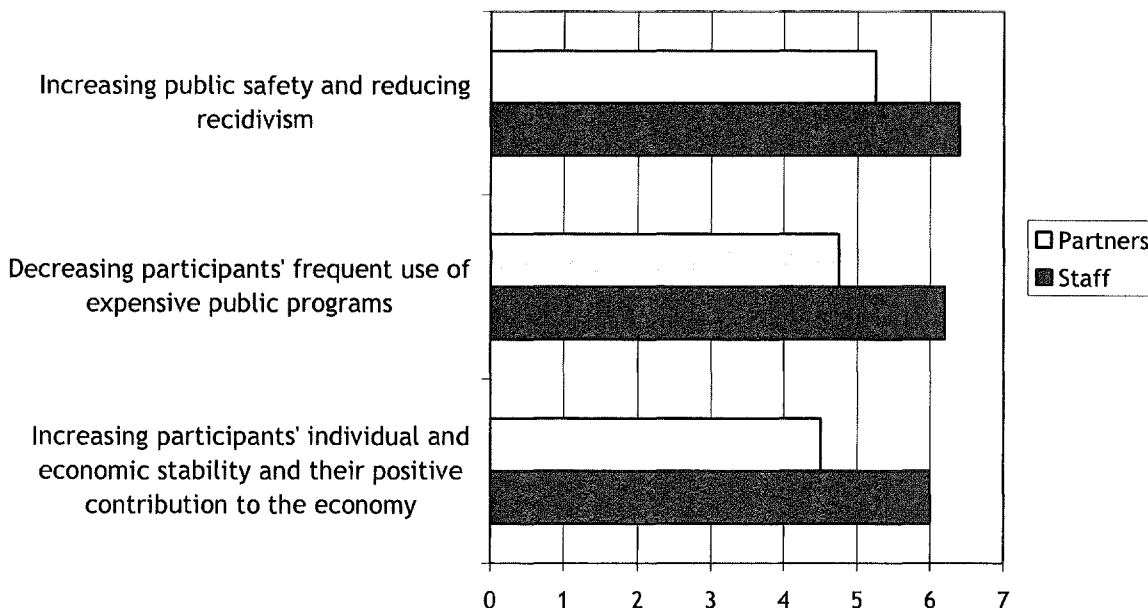
NetWork participants build relationships through day to day interactions, but many have also known each other for years. And this can be an additional strength in the relationships. One interviewee described,

*Most of brothers in the NetWork I've been knowing for years. We critique our relations, make it better than it used to be. We know how we are, we know how each other is; if we see a brother down, we're like 'What is wrong? Is you alright? Want to talk about it? Maybe my opinion might help you; maybe someone else's will.'*

## Overall Feedback on the NetWork

In surveys, partners and staff commented on the NetWork's progress towards its main goals. Figure 16 below shows that partners and staff are generally positive about the NetWork's progress to meeting its goals, though partners are less positive than staff. This Figure shows that partners and staff cite the NetWork's greatest success as reducing recidivism and the area of least success as increasing participants' economic stability.

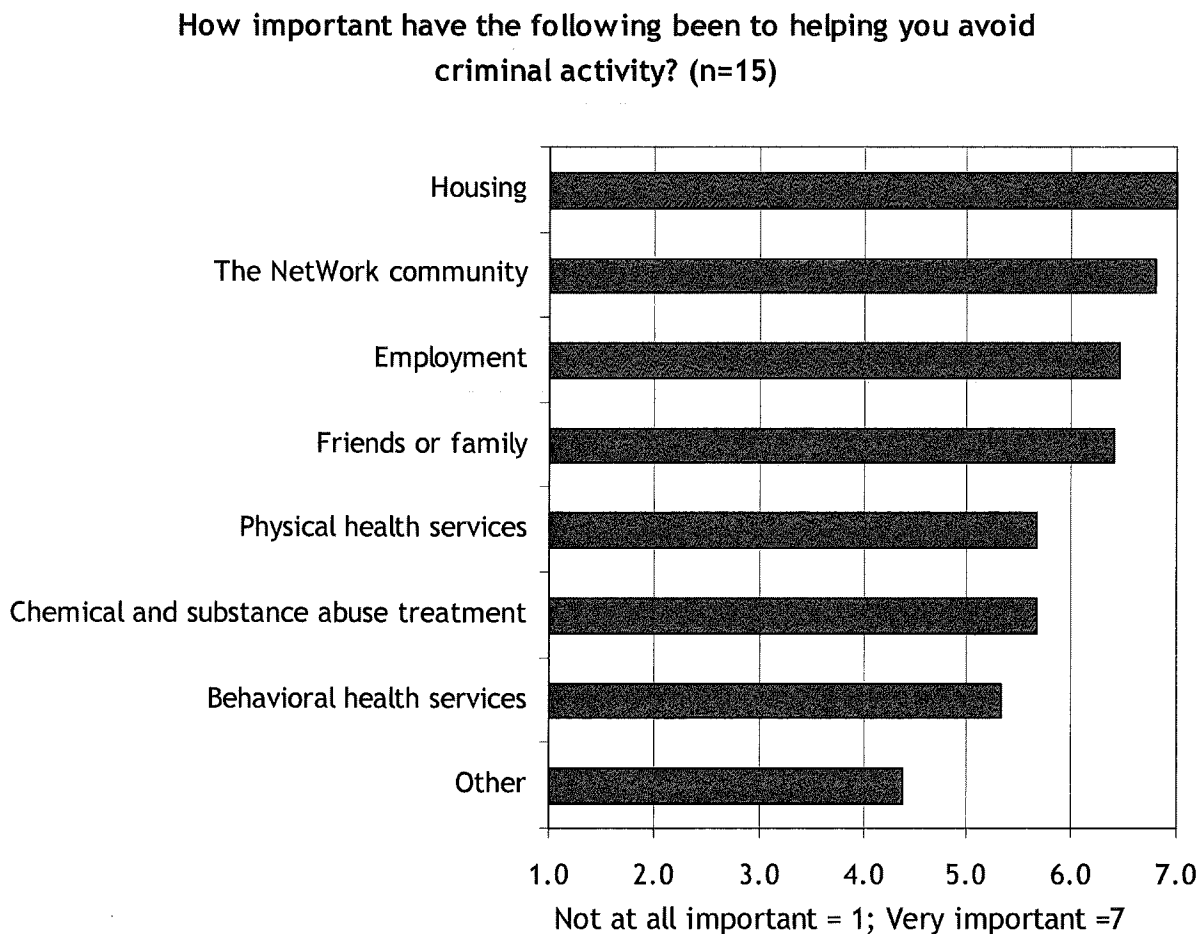
**Figure 16. Partner and Staff Views on NetWork Success (1=Not at all successful; 7=Very successful)**



Source: the Improve Group

In their surveys, participants also commented on the NetWork's impact on their recidivism. Figure 17 shows that participants feel that housing is the most important contributor to avoiding criminal activity, but the NetWork community follows closely behind. Mental and chemical health treatment are ranked near the bottom, though still ranked as important.

**Figure 17. Participants' Assessment of NetWork Effect on Criminal Activity**



Source: the Improve Group

When asked specifically how such items help them stay out of prison, interviewees explained that the positive atmosphere in the community provides a constant reminder of an alternate route for them. As one interviewee put it,

*[the positive community] shows people there is another route. A guy might not know how to communicate if they have a problem with something. Someone here might pull him to the side and talk to him, say [try to] be more assertive;*

*it doesn't always have to be negative. There's always somebody here to help. If I went somewhere else might not be anybody there to remind you...*

Another reflected on his previous release when he went to a Goodwill Easter Seals training program, but ended up violating his release. He said that once he left Goodwill, "[you are] on your own, back with yourself. You are around people so much here..." Another interviewee described,

*Being an addict, [you] know you can't do it alone. You've got to surround yourself with positive people. I am kind of a secluded person, like to be to myself a lot, kind of quiet, but I could see I couldn't do it like that. I done cried in a couple [NetWork] meetings, talking about my life or whatever. It's good to get that stuff out; you try to hold it in and be macho and make bad decisions. People kind of know who you is if you around them all the time like we are, can tell when something is wrong, ask if everything is ok. You have people who can relate to you. [Question: You didn't feel like that before on the previous release?] No, it felt like me against the world."*

Having a program or schedule is helpful because otherwise people don't know what to do when they are released, according to several of the interviewees. The schedule provides positive activities for the men to be involved in, and limits opportunities for them to find themselves in negative situations. One interviewee said, "I don't have time to be running around and hanging out in the street. I'd find stuff to get into; now I have something to get into." Another recounted his story of a previous (unsuccessful) release. He violated his release by drinking with a cousin, who he acknowledges is a bad influence. Though his cousin may still visit from time to time, it makes it easier for this interviewee to say no to going out with him at night because the interviewee has to get up early for work. Interviewees also enumerated the challenges with finding housing and a job, as described above.

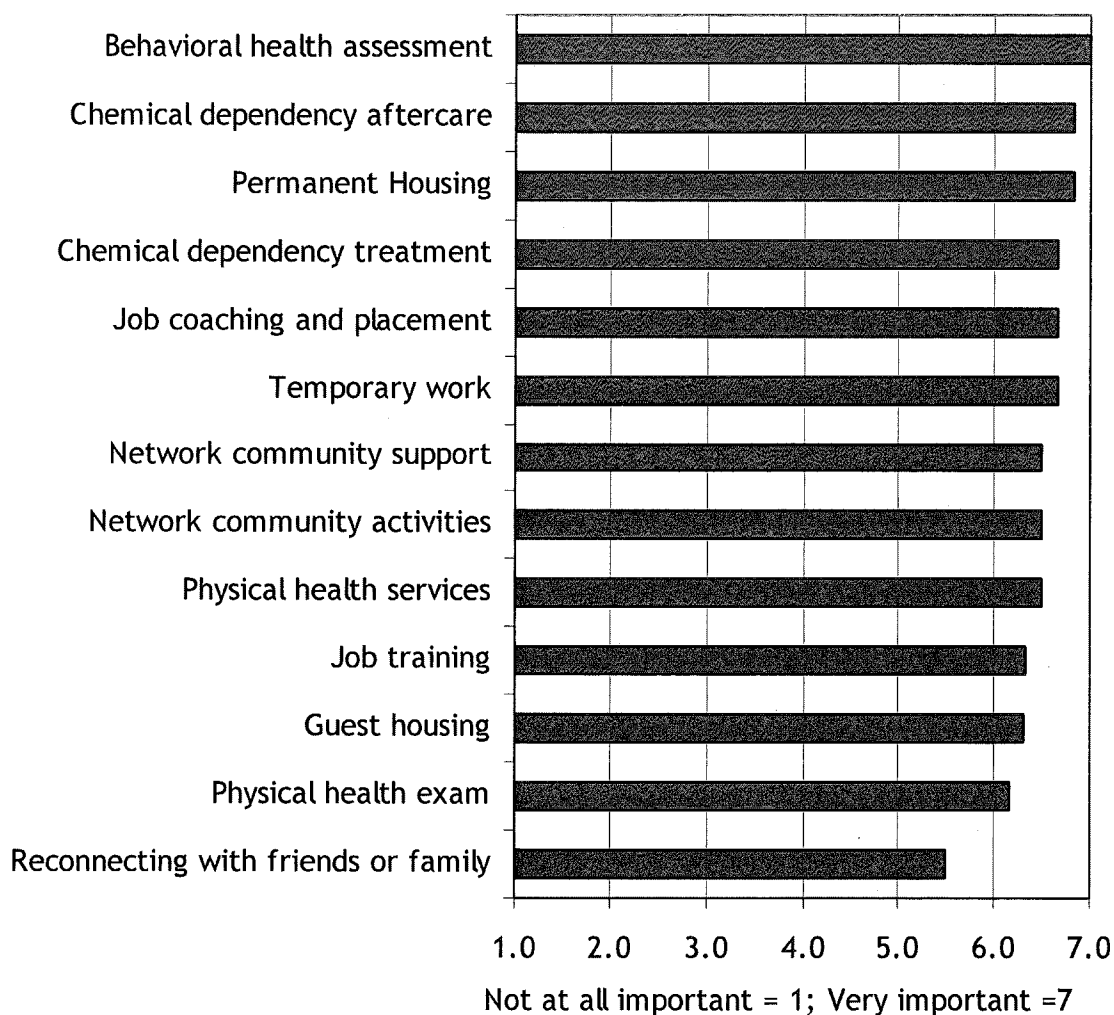
All of the interviewees stressed that it is not up to the NetWork to meet all their needs. They said that participants will be successful if they WANT to change, that the responsibility lies with the individual.

Staff also commented in surveys on what was most important to help participants with re-entry. As Figure 18 shows, they ranked chemical and mental health treatment at the top of the list, though they attributed importance to all items.



**Figure 18. Staff Perspectives on What is Most Important to Help Participants with Re-Entry**

**How important are the following in helping NetWork participants with successful re-entry? (n=6)**



Source: the Improve Group

In surveys, staff explained that coaching, community building activities, empowerment meetings and bi-weekly Sunday dinners all contribute to the success of the NetWork in serving participants. Additionally, housing, providing immediate work, the sense of community, the relationships created and providing a safe space for men to meet also were mentioned as success factors for the program. Staff expressed that the intentional sense of community provided by the NetWork as well as the cohesive all-encompassing services provided,

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including behavioral and physical health services, housing, work and life coaching, make the NetWork different from other organizations that serve released offenders.

NetWork partner organizations felt that a sense of community, the offering of integrated services (housing in particular), the accountability of participants, coaching provided to participants, the philosophy of the program and the dedication of management team and staff are all factors that contribute to the success of the program. When asked what makes the NetWork different from other organizations that serve released offenders, partner organizations cited the integration of services as the main difference, with components of this including affordable housing, health care, a support network and interim employment.

#### Suggestions for Improvement

Interviewees had few suggestions of any changes they would make to the NetWork. One said that additional assistance with getting better paid jobs would be good. Another expressed that he wished the NetWork would more often ask participants for ideas on how to do things.

Several interviewees did comment on an aspect of the NetWork they would like to see changed. They felt that some participants did not commit themselves to the NetWork and take it all seriously. Interviewees said the NetWork was “too lenient” or should do more screening of participants or ask men who are not serious to leave the program. These interviewees described that it can be distracting to them and detract from the positive community when people are being negative or not taking the honesty and commitment to one another seriously. A couple interviewees mentioned that a new internal committee or council was being started. This body would be made up of participants and help the NetWork make decisions about whether participants should stay.

Staff suggestions for improvement in serving participants include: increased funding to increase staff, strengthened partner relationships, intensified behavioral health supports, expanded empowerment training, expanded job opportunities and more tailored, individual approaches that allow individuals more time for self-knowledge and self-reflection.

## Next Steps in the Evaluation

The evaluation will continue through June 2009, at which point a final evaluation report will be delivered to the Department of Corrections. The Improve Group will work with the Department of Corrections, the NetWork and other evaluation stakeholders to discuss next steps in the evaluation. The most important step will be to work with the NetWork to increase the amount of data available for the evaluation. The Improve Group will meet with the NetWork to determine if relevant data on all enrollees not included in this report is included in paper files or other records. The Improve Group will make a realistic data collection plan with the NetWork based on the experience of data collection for the annual report, and seek to identify other sources of key data that the NetWork is unable to track or report. In addition, the Improve Group will seek to increase data about those who declined to participate in the NetWork and those who became inactive through interviews.

Additional data gathering will help to answer questions for which insufficient data was available in this report. For example, this report was unable to assess progress on the following indicators:

- 'Multiplier effect' of wages earned by participants
- How long participants have been working in full or part-time work
- Employment status of all NetWork participants
- Percent of participants receiving a rent subsidy who increase earned income each quarter
- Dates and completion of mental health and physical health assessments
- Percent of participants with chronic behavioral or health issues in active treatment
- Differences in outcomes for those enrollees who are more active in community activities

## Appendix A: The NetWork for Better Futures Evaluation Logic Model

Inputs/ Activities	Overarching goals			Outcomes	Indicators of success	Measures
Integrated services efficiently and consistently delivered across multiple agencies to ensure that upon release from incarceration, participants have access to: <input type="checkbox"/> Safe, affordable housing; <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral health services; <input type="checkbox"/> Primary health care; <input type="checkbox"/> Short-term employment and education; and <input type="checkbox"/> A positive community created by and supporting NetWork participants.	Increase participants' individual economic stability and their positive contribution to the economy			Pay court-ordered restitution or fines (if required)	% of participants required to pay restitution or court fines that have a plan for making payments	-NetWork records, if possible -Court/DOC data
					% of participants required to pay restitution or court fines that are in compliance with a payment plan	-NetWork records, if possible -Court/DOC data
				Consistently pay child support	% of participants required to pay child support that have a plan for making payments	-NetWork records -State agency data (DHS)
					% of participants required to pay child support that are in compliance with a payment plan	-NetWork records -State agency data (DHS)
	Decrease participants' frequent use of expensive public programs			Maintain physical health	% of participants that obtain medical insurance	-NetWork records -County records
					% of participants receiving physical exams	-NetWork records -Partner data (Medica and healthcare providers)
					% of participants requiring follow-up from the exam that obtained treatment	-Partner data (Medica and healthcare providers) -Participant surveys
					% of participants with chronic diseases in active treatment for chronic diseases	-Partner data (Medica and healthcare providers) -Participant surveys
					% of participants that have made behavior changes to improve their health	-Participant interviews -Participant surveys

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Inputs/ Activities	Overarching goals			Outcomes	Indicators of success	Measures
<p>Integrated services efficiently and consistently delivered across multiple agencies to ensure that upon release from incarceration, participants have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Safe, affordable housing;</li> <li>□ Behavioral health services;</li> <li>□ Primary health care;</li> <li>□ Short-term employment and education; and</li> <li>□ A positive community created by and supporting NetWork participants.</li> </ul>	Increase participants' individual economic stability and their positive contribution to the economy	Decrease participants' frequent use of expensive public programs	Increase public safety and reduce recidivism	Maintain physical health (cont.)	Minimal use of emergency room, detox and crisis services	-NetWork records, if possible -Partner data (Medica) -County data
				Establish stable, adequate housing that is paid partially or fully by participants	% of participants in stable housing	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					Average rent paid by participants in program 6 months or longer	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants (in program 6 months or longer) paying full rent	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					Find and keep stable, adequate employment	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants working on Better Futures work crews	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants with a full-time job (35+ hours/week)	-NetWork records -Participant surveys -DEED (wage levels)
					% of participants with a part-time job of 15 - 34 hours a week	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					The 'multiplier effect' of wages earned by participants	-NetWork records (income) -Surveys (income) -DEED data (income) -Imputed multiplier
					Average months working the same full- time job (for participants in the program 6 months or longer)	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants receiving a rent subsidy who increase earned income each quarter	-NetWork records (through end rent subsidy)
					% of participants that are satisfied with their jobs	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
				Enhance job readiness	% of participants with a GED or higher degree	-NetWork records -Participant surveys



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Inputs/ Activities	Overarching goals			Outcomes	Indicators of success	Measures
Integrated services efficiently and consistently delivered across multiple agencies to ensure that upon release from incarceration, participants have access to: ❑ Safe, affordable housing; ❑ Behavioral health services; ❑ Primary health care; ❑ Short-term employment and education; and ❑ A positive community created by and supporting NetWork participants.	Increase participants' individual economic stability and their positive contribution to the economy	Decrease participants' frequent use of expensive public programs	Increase public safety and reduce recidivism	Enhance job readiness (cont.)	% of participants in the process of earning a GED or higher degree	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants completing a job skills training program	-NetWork records -Participant surveys -Partner data (Summit Academy OIC and Twin Cities RISE!)
					% of participants with a valid driver's license or a valid ID	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
				Become financially independent	% of participants with a checking account	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants with a savings account	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants who have maintained a checking account for 3 months (of those in the program over 3 months )	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants who have maintained a savings account for 3 months (of those in the program over 3 months )	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants with at least \$1,000 in a savings account	-NetWork records -Participant surveys
					% of participants (in program 3 months or more) that are making progress on their personal prosperity plan	-NetWork records -Participant surveys -Participant interviews
					Form supportive community	% of participants that participate in community gatherings
	% of participants with no more than 3 unexcused absences from community gatherings	-NetWork records -Participant surveys				

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Inputs/ Activities	Overarching goals			Outcomes	Indicators of success	Measures
Integrated services efficiently and consistently delivered across multiple agencies to ensure that upon release from incarceration, participants have access to: ❑ Safe, affordable housing; ❑ Behavioral health services; ❑ Primary health care; ❑ Short-term employment and education; and ❑ A positive community created by and supporting NetWork participants.		Decrease participants' frequent use of expensive public programs	Increase public safety and reduce recidivism	Experience few barriers in navigating systems/services	% participants that report ease of use across systems and services	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
				Build positive relationships	% of participants in contact with family and friends after reentry, as appropriate	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
					# of supportive relationships participants have with family or friends	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
					% of participants avoiding acquaintances, friends or family who are negative influences	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
				Volunteer to serve the community	% of participants that have participated in voluntary community service	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
					% of participants that have participated in voluntary community service at least one time per month	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
				Serve as mentors to one another	% of participants serving as a Peer Mentor	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews
		% of participants that have served as a Peer Mentor for at least 3 months	-Participant surveys -Participant interviews			
		Comply with all supervised release or probation requirements	% of participants in compliance with all supervised release or probation requirements	-DOC data -Network and county agent records (if negotiated terms)		
		Reduce criminal activity	% of participants/members arrested	-NetWork records -County data -DOC data		

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Inputs/ Activities	Overarching goals			Outcomes	Indicators of success	Measures
Integrated services efficiently and consistently delivered across multiple agencies to ensure that upon release from incarceration, participants have access to: <input type="checkbox"/> Safe, affordable housing; <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral health services; <input type="checkbox"/> Primary health care; <input type="checkbox"/> Short-term employment and education; and <input type="checkbox"/> Positive community experience among NetWork participants.			Increase public safety and reduce recidivism	Reduce criminal activity (cont.)	% of participants/members with new criminal convictions	-NetWork records -County data -State agency data (DOC)
				Complete treatment for chemical dependency (if needed)	% participants with chemical dependency that are in compliance with aftercare treatment	-Partner data (Turning Point, RS Eden, Fairview) -Participant surveys
					% participants with chemical dependency with at least 6 months sobriety	-NetWork records -Partner data (Turning Point, RS Eden, Fairview) -Participant surveys
					% relapses successfully managed by getting participant into treatment	-NetWork records -Partner data (Turning Point, RS Eden, Fairview)
				Receive treatment for behavioral health issues, such as medication or counseling (if needed)	% of participants receiving behavioral health assessments	-NetWork assessment -Partner data (Medica)
					% of participants requiring follow-up from the behavioral health assessment that obtained treatment	-NetWork records -Partner data -Participant surveys
					% of participants that have improved their behavioral/mental health	-Participant interviews -Participant surveys -LSIR and/or NetWork records as available
					% of participants with chronic behavioral health issues in active treatment for their issues	-Participant interviews -Participant surveys -NetWork records -Partner data